INSTRUCTIONS ON CHRISTIAN MORALITY

KIELY

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INSTRUCTIONS ON CHRISTIAN MORALITY

FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

THE REV. JOHN KIELY

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To the Memory of

THE REV. HENRY HILL, B.A., P.P.,
OUR LADY AND ST. HUBERT'S,
GREAT HARWOOD, LANCS.,

A devoted Pastor and a true friend

PREFACE

The following letters may serve as a preface to this book:

I

Our Lady & St. Hubert's,

Great Harwood,

Near Blackburn.

Reverend and Dear Father Kiely:—

I wish to recommend to you very strongly an admirable little French work entitled *"Plans d'Instructions sur les Principaux Sujèts de la Morale Chrétienne."*

It is admirably arranged, and full of very apposite and valuable quotations from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. The modest author, who does not even disclose his name, and signs himself merely "Un Curé du Diocèse de Liége," has produced a work that will be found of the greatest service to preachers and teachers, and to all who have to explain and enforce Christian Doctrine.

We have, no doubt, many books of instruction in English, but I know of none exactly like this, and I feel sure that it would receive a hearty welcome if it were presented to the English-speaking public in an English dress. The plan is *first* to explain the doctrine and to divide it into its different parts; *then* to give a number of striking verses from the Bible bearing on the subject, which are exceedingly well-chosen, and quoted *in extenso;* and *finally* to give a variety of extracts from the writings of the Fathers of the Church, which help to enforce and emphasize the special doctrine under consideration.

If you could see your way to make a good English translation of this admirable book I feel sure you would be doing a very good and a very useful work, and that you would be conferring a real boon on the general Catholic public.

Yours very truly,

(signed) ✠ JOHN S. VAUGHAN.

II

St. Bede's College,

Manchester, S. W.

16th October, 1920.

I am impressed with the great value of these admirable Instructions on Christian Morality, which are not only in themselves extremely full and well-arranged, but are also remarkable for their abundant quotations from Holy Scripture and from the Fathers of the Church. I should be very glad to see an English translation published, as I believe that it would be of the greatest utility in the hands of our clergy and of those engaged in giving religious instruction.

(signed) ✠ Louis Charles,

Bishop of Salford.

III

St. Joseph's Priory,

Todmorden, Lancs.

26th January, 1923.

Dear Father Kiely:—

At the request of His Lordship the Bishop of Salford, I have examined your translation of the *"Plans d'Instructions sur les Principaux Sujèts de la Morale Chrétienne."* I congratulate you most heartily on the work you have undertaken with such success.

The perusal of your manuscript has afforded me immense pleasure.

The book itself is splendid—in fact, quite unique. Published by a Curé of Liége, in 1851, it still holds the foremost place among works of catechetical instruction.

The wealth of Scriptural texts, and the copious quotations from the writings of the Fathers, which the learned author brings to bear upon each doctrinal explanation, give to this book a characteristic entirely of its own, and raise it far above the level of most catechetical works.

In this work the priest will have at hand a rich mine of thought and suggestion for doctrinal and moral instruction. The layman will possess the key to a priceless store of Catholic doctrine and devotion.

I know of no other book which so eminently accords in a concise

and handy form, with the exhortation of Pope Benedict XV in his Encyclical Letter on Preaching (15 June, 1917): "The test of the orator's power and skill is his success in making his hearers accept the stern truth he is preaching. How did the Apostle unfold the subjects of which he treated? 'Not in the persuasive words of human wisdom' (1 Cor. ii, 4). It is perfectly plain, Venerable Brethren, how important for everybody it is that they should thoroughly realize this, since we see that not a few of our sacred preachers overlook in their sermons the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the arguments based on sacred theology, and for the most part make their appeals to reason." Your own share in the publication of this work is most admirable. Your translation is excellent—exact, clear, and concise.

The English speaking people are under a debt of gratitude to you for having presented to them in its English dress this beautiful book. I am confident that this course of Instructions is destined to have a large circulation and to accomplish an immense amount of good.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) J. M. McCarthy, O.S.M.,

Censor Deputatus.

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Instructions on Christian Morality

I

MOTIVES AND MEANS OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

"Come children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Ps. xxxiii, 12)

We are your pastors, your salvation is very dear to us.

"The charity of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v, 14)

"God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i, 8)

We wish to teach you what you must do in order to be truly happy. This is why, assisted by divine grace, we say with the Apostles that we shall not cease to announce to you the word of God.

"We give ourselves continually to the ministry of the word." (Acts vi, 4)

I will show you to-day the obligation under which you are of receiving religious instruction and the means which you can and should employ for that object.

I. MOTIVES OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

1. *God commands it.* 2. *Religious Knowledge essentially Necessary.* 3. *The Evils that result from Ignorance of Religion.*

1. *God Commands it.*

The Sacred Scriptures show us the divine will in this matter in the clearest terms.

"These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children: and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising, and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand." (Deut. vi, 8)

"Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds: and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes. Teach

your children that they meditate on them." (Deut. xi, 18–19)

In the New Law the first command which Jesus Christ gave His Apostles when He sent them out to establish His Church, was to instruct the people:—

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations." (Matth. xxviii, 19.) He makes this one of the principal duties of every pastor.

2. Religious Knowledge is Essentially Necessary.

Why? Because it consists in knowing God, the end for which He created us, the worship we should give to Him, the commandments we have to observe, the infinite reward He has prepared for us, and the infallible means of obtaining that reward.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. xi, 16)

But in order to have or to preserve that faith one must be instructed.

Two things must be distinguished in faith: (1) the disposition of our minds and hearts to believe all that is revealed; (2) the particular truths which we should believe. The first comes from God alone.

"It is the gift of God." (Eph. ii, 8)

As to the truths we should believe, in the ordinary course of Providence, God teaches them to us only by preaching, reading, etc.

"How shall they believe . . . without a preacher? . . . Faith cometh by hearing." (Rom. x, 14, 17)

We are strictly obliged to observe the Commandments.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." (Matth. xix, 17)

It is necessary then to *know* the Commandments.

Prayer is absolutely necessary for us.

"We ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke xviii, 1)

We must therefore *learn how to pray.*

Our own interest urges us to be instructed in religion.

"Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations that have not known Thee; and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name." (Ps. lxxviii, 6)

"All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God." (Wis. xiii, 1)

In other branches of knowledge there is nothing but vanity and danger, unless we are acquainted with the science of salvation. In order to work efficaciously at this important affair of salvation, three things are necessary: we must know the good we are to do and the evil we are to avoid; we must firmly resolve to avoid the evil and to do the good; and, finally, we must put that resolution into practice. But what great power religious instruction has to produce these three results! It is a torch that enlightens the mind.

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet." (Ps. cxviii, 105)

It makes us avoid errors, evil ways, and the illusions of the devil. It enkindles in the heart a love of virtue and a horror of vice. Finally, religious instruction urges us to do good and to avoid evil. Those who are well instructed in religion are firm in their faith, will fall less frequently, will rise again more easily, and feel at least compunction.

3. *Evils that Result from Ignorance of Religion.*

Ignorance united to pride has been the cause of the heresies, persecutions, forgetfulness of God, indifference with regard to God and salvation, and all the other disorders with which the world is filled.

"If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii, 8)

"The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God." (John xvi, 2)

Whence arises the forgetfulness of God that reigns in the world to-day? Ought we to be astonished that God is so little loved, when we remember that He is so little known? It is the same as regards the indifference to salvation, contempt of religion, blasphemies, profanation of holy things, and the carelessness with which parents instruct their children. Very often it is from ignorance that injustice in business and contracts, neglect of the duties of one's state of life, etc., arise. In a word, it is ignorance that causes the loss of countless myriads of souls.

There is no question here of invincible ignorance.

"My ignorances do not remember." (Ps. xxiv, 7)

"Invincible ignorance will not be imputed to you as a fault; but ignorance ceases to be invincible and will be imputed as a fault, when you can acquire the necessary knowledge and neglect to do so." (S. Aug.)

The ignorance of the greater number of Christians is not invincible.

"He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. xxxv, 4)

"Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job xxi, 14). "So that they are inexcusable." (Rom. 1, 20)

"Who as it were on purpose have revolted from Him, and would not understand all His ways." (Job xxxiv, 27)

"Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge." (Is. v, 13)

"Grow (therefore) in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii, 18)

"Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death." (Ps. xii, 4)

"Come ye to Him and be enlightened." (Ps. xxxiii, 6)

"If any man know not, he shall not be known." (1 Cor. xiv, 38)

II. MEANS OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

1. *Acquiring a Knowledge of Religion.* 2. *Vain Excuses of those who Neglect it.* 3. *Manner of Assisting with Profit at Instructions.*

1. There are *two means of acquiring a knowledge of religion,*— private instructions at home and public instructions.

1. *Private Instructions*

Those who can do so should read good books and instruct those who cannot read.

"They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii, 3)

"If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (Jas. v, 19 sq.)

Of all the works of mercy this is perhaps the most pleasing to God and the most useful to our neighbor. Sooner or later it draws down the blessing of God on those who practise it. It requires time and patience, no doubt, to instruct those who are very ignorant; but think of the crown that awaits you, and the good that follows your work, of which God will keep account. Shall it be said that, while Satan finds his Apostles, Jesus Christ, the King of kings, cannot find persons zealous to make Him known?

Fathers and mothers especially, and masters and mistresses, ought to give these familiar instructions to their children and their servants.

"But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v, 8)

God is pleased to pour down His blessings on families when parents neglect no means of instructing their children. That is why He blessed Abraham:

"For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice." (Gen. xviii, 19)

Public Instructions

Another way of gaining a knowledge of religion is to assist at public instructions and sermons. It is the duty of priests to give instructions.

"They shall seek the law at his mouth." (Malach. ii, 7)

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations." (Matth. xxviii, 19)

Their teaching is the teaching of God Himself:

"God as it were exhorting by us." (2 Cor. v, 20)

If Christ were still visible on earth, how eagerly people would run to hear Him speak! But when the priests of His Church give these instructions, is it not He Himself who speaks through their mouth? There are, then, special graces attached to their instructions.

"He that is of God heareth the word of God." (John viii, 47)

2. *Vain Excuses*

There are some who excuse their neglect of religious instruction by saying that they are already sufficiently instructed. But are they as well instructed as they should be? Do they know the fundamental truths of the religion they profess, the holiness and the spirit of the Gospel, the necessity for each one to strive after perfection according to his state, the means by which they can attain to that perfection? What illusions and errors many people labor under regarding these matters! It is very much to be feared that many who say, and believe, that they are instructed, may be among those of whom the Holy Ghost says:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. (1 Cor. i, 19)

"For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. i, 22)

Others say they have no time.

"You have time to engage in worldly affairs, but you have no time to gain a knowledge of Christ, that is, to learn the wisdom of God." (S. Paulinus)

But: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

Is it the trouble of being instructed that discourages them? But does it not cost them more trouble and labor to gain the perishable goods of this world?

3. *How to assist at Religious Instruction with Profit*

Before the instruction, pray to the Holy Ghost to enlighten your mind and to dispose your heart to receive the truths you are about to hear, as He disposed Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to those things which were said by Paul." (Acts xvi, 14). Do not be of the number of those "who love the truths that please them, but hate those to which their conduct is opposed, saying:

"Speak pleasing things to us." (S. Aug.)

Be very attentive during the instruction, for it is God who speaks by the mouth of His priests:

"He that heareth you, heareth Me." (Luke x, 16)

Moreover, do not the grandeur and the excellence of those things that form the subject of Christian instruction, deserve the greatest possible attention?

After the instruction, beg of God the grace to put into practice what you have heard. This is the fruit and the object of all instruction.

"By this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments. He who saith that he knoweth Him and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John ii, 3, 4)

The knowledge of the word of God increases the guilt of those who do not profit by it.

"My word shall not return to Me void." (Is. lv, 2)

"Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke xi, 28)

II

DIVINE ORIGIN OF RELIGION

"All things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." (John xv, 15)

It is of vital importance to have a good knowledge of the fundamental truths of the religion in which you have had the happiness to be born, and which you profess. It is important also to know the motives or grounds of your belief. A Christian who does not know them is exposed to grave dangers. I wish, then, to speak to you today of the religion which Jesus Christ came to establish on earth, and to prove its divine origin: I. By the holiness of its Author and of His doctrine; II. By the prophecies that foretold and the miracles that accompanied it; III. By its establishment in the world and by the martyrs it has produced.

I. The Holiness of its Author and of His Doctrine

1. The holiness of the founder of a religion, and of his doctrine, is an essential condition in judging whether that religion comes from God. But the life and teaching of Christ are so holy, that they alone would be sufficient to prove His divinity. He possessed all virtues in an infinitely perfect degree, without any admixture of defects. How submissive was He not to the commands of His Eternal Father!

"I do always the things that please Him." (John viii, 29)

Virtues with regard to man: His whole life was given for the salvation of mankind.

"I am not come to call the just, but sinners." (Matth. ix, 13)

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv, 13)

His goodness towards those who appealed to Him, towards those even who did not think of asking His help, or who were His enemies, His charity, His compassion for the poor and suffering; His mortification, His humility, His meekness. . . .

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matth. xi, 29)

"Which of you shall convince Me of sin." (John viii, 46)

"The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; to them that dwell in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen." (Isa. ix, 2)

2. The holiness of His doctrine. What grand, what holy and useful instructions does He not give us?

And first, as to God,—how sublime is the idea which the teaching of Christ gives us of Him! It shows us His perfections, His works, and our principal duties towards Him. If we pass to those things that concern our human nature, our state and our last end, we find in them the same light, the same wisdom, the same subjects of wonder.

The very mysteries of religion, by the sublimity and the grandeur of the ideas they contain, give us ground for believing that that religion comes from God. The mind of man could never have imagined such things.

The commands and the prohibitions of religion concerning ourselves and our neighbor, show us its holiness no less clearly. It commands temperance and sobriety in all things, patience in adversity. It forbids excessive ambition.

With regard to our neighbor, religion commands us to consider all men as our brethren, and to love them as we love ourselves, not excepting even our enemies. How beautiful is this moral law, and how worthy of God Himself!

Let us admire also what that holy religion does to make pleasing to God those who follow its precepts and counsels. Interior and exterior graces; efficacy of prayers; help from the sacraments. There are many ways open to us by which to save our souls.

"The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones." (Ps. xviii, 8)

"My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." (John vii, 16)

II. PROPHECIES AND MIRACLES

Prophecies and miracles are the most certain proof of the mission of a man who proclaims that he has been sent by Almighty God, and of the divine origin of a religion.

1. *Prophecies.*—There is nothing more undeniable than the prophecies, whether we consider those that foretold the coming of Jesus Christ or those spoken by Christ Himself.

The prophets of the Old Law foretold so clearly all that regarded the Messias and the religion He was to bring to the world, that in a certain manner they had written His history before He came. Our Lord Himself intimated this to the Jews: "Search the Scriptures . . .

and the same are they that give testimony of Me." (John v, 39)

In proof of His divinity and of His religion Christ foretold several events,—among others, His death, the denial of Peter, the treason of Judas.

Truth of the prophecies . . . Proofs . . . their fulfilment.

2. *Miracles.*—To prove more clearly the divinity of Christ and of His religion, miracles are added to prophecies. The Divine Redeemer Himself worked innumerable miracles.

"The works which My Father hath given Me to perfect: the works themselves which I do, give testimony of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." (John v, 36)

His Apostles worked many miracles, and from their time to ours the gift of miracles has never ceased in the Church.

Nothing could be more complete than the proofs of the reality of these miracles. First, it is evident that all these wonderful occurrences are true miracles, since they could not have been produced by any natural cause. Such wonders could come only from God. In the second place, as to the certainty of these miracles, they are public events of so great importance, whether in themselves or in their results, that we are forced to believe Jesus Christ to be God, and His religion to be divine,—facts acknowledged by multitudes of witnesses, worthy of credit, who had no interest in deceiving, and who could not have deceived, even if they had wished to do so.

"God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles." (Heb. ii, 4)

"O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep." (Ps. xci, 6)

"This is the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes." (Ps. cxvii, 25)

"Deny the gift of miracles attributed to the Apostles, and you must admit a still greater miracle, namely, the promulgation of the Gospel and the propagation of the Christian faith throughout the world without the aid of miracles." (S. Aug.)

"How could the philosophers have believed, unless miracles had evidently given them faith in the unseen?" (S. Aug.)

"Lord, if what we believe is not true, we have been deceived by Thee; for those things which we believe have been confirmed by signs and wonders that were caused by Thee alone." (Rich. of S. Victor)

But perhaps you will ask: Why do we see so few miracles in our day? The reason is that there is not now the same necessity for miracles as there was in the first ages of Christianity. Nevertheless God still works them from time to time.

III. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD, AND THE MARTYRS IT HAS PRODUCED

1. There is nothing more interesting than the manner in which the religion of Jesus Christ spread throughout the world. It was not preached by rich, powerful, or learned men, nor by leaders of armies who could enforce their teaching by the sword. The Apostles were poor men, who did not possess either worldly riches or learning.

And consider the obstacles they had to overcome,—obstacles caused by the prejudices and passions of men, and by the persecutions of all the powers of this world.

To the many and great obstacles raised by men were added those raised by the evil spirit, who spared no efforts to make them greater. He held mankind in his power, he alone was adored in almost every part of the world. The Christian religion then did not find any favorable disposition in the heart of man. It is this that makes us understand what great miracles were necessary for its propagation throughout the world, a propagation that was as rapid as it was general.

"The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise: . . . And things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight." (1 Cor. i, 27–29)

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (*Ibid.*, 25)

"I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Matth, xi, 25)

2. *Martyrs.*—See the multitude of those witnesses to the truth and confessors of the faith; examine the cause, the fearful severity of their torments, and the manner in which they suffered, and you will find again the hand of God stamped there plainly, as in all His other works. It is only God who could have given them such strength and courage.

"And He [Christ] commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was appointed by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead." (Acts x, 42)

This explains their courageous reply to both Jews and pagans: "We ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts v, 29)

It was said that the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians.

"The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians; as often as we are cut down, many others become Christians." (Tert.)

"As concerning this sect, we know that it is gainsaid everywhere." (Acts xxviii, 22)

And what was the cause for which these generous martyrs suffered torments and death? What humiliating reflections for the Christians of to-day! We cannot listen without shuddering to an account of the torments the early Christians were forced to endure. No one but God could have given such strength and courage to them. Let us acknowledge, then, that a religion established by so many miracles can come from Heaven alone.

"If the Gospel was not true, no one would shed his blood in its defence." (S. Jerome)

"The Master has been suspended on the Cross, the disciples have been imprisoned, and the religion increases each day." (*Ibid.*)

"This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that is for ever: all they that keep it shall come to life; but they that have forsaken it, to death. . . . We are happy, O Israel, because the things that are pleasing to God are made known to us." (Baruch iv, 1–4)

"Return, O Jacob, and take hold of it, walk in the way by its brightness, in the presence of the light thereof. Give not thy honor to another, nor thy dignity to a strange nation." (*Ibid.*, 2–3)

III

FAITH

"He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name." (John i, 12)

Faith is a gift of God by which we believe. It is the first of the theological virtues, without which no one can be saved. It is the homage of our reason, which we render to the authority of God, in order to believe the truths He has revealed to us, but it should also be the homage of our will and of our heart, in order to do what He has commanded. I will show you: I. What the faith of a Christian should be; II. What the faith of most Christians in reality is.

I. WHAT THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x, 4, 5)

The *qualities* which faith should possess are: 1. It should be humble and submissive: "bringing into captivity." 2. Entire and universal: "every understanding." 3. Living and active: "unto the obedience of Christ."

1. *Faith should be humble and submissive.* For what is it?

"Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." (Heb. xi, 1)

There are in religion some truths which we understand:

"The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." (Rom. i, 20)

There are other truths that surpass our understanding; and yet we believe these more firmly by the help of faith than if we saw them with our eyes; because our faith is founded on the word of God and on the authority and infallibility of His Church, whose decisions are so unerring that St. Augustine says: "I would not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me to do so."

"If the works of God were such as to be easily understood by human reason, they could not be called unspeakable. Neither has faith any merit if its object can be proved by reason and experience." (S. Aug.)

Though we should have allotted to us all the treasures of knowledge, if we were wanting in humility and submission to the Church, she would disown us and refuse to recognize us as her children. This is why St. Peter calls Christians "children of obedience." (1 Pet. i, 14). And St. Paul attributes to them the same quality: "We are not the children of withdrawing unto perdition, but of faith to the saving of the soul." (Heb. x, 19)

2. *Faith should be entire and universal.*

There is nothing so vast in extent as faith; what takes place in Heaven and in hell; what is buried in the darkness of the past and what is still hidden in the abyss of the future—all is the province of faith, which, as it shares in the knowledge of God, includes things most remote (that is, far apart from one another and from us). We can divide those things that are the object of faith, but we cannot divide faith itself: "One faith" (Eph. iv, 5), because the formal object of faith is the First Truth, God, revealing to His Church the dogmas which that Church proposes to us. We must believe all these dogmas, or we believe nothing at all.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (Jas. ii, 10)

"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i, 10)

We must not add to, nor take from, the faith. Private opinions could never become the faith of the Church.

"Times change, but not faith." (S. Aug.)

3. *Faith should be living and active,* "unto the obedience of Christ."

If we are to believe with a faith pleasing to God, we must do something more than profess the faith with our lips; we must let our faith influence our conduct, and show by our lives that we do believe. The faith that justifies is that which works by charity.

"[The saints] by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises." (Heb. xi, 33)

"All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth." (Heb. xi, 13)

"Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him." (Heb. xi, 6)

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark xvi, 16)

"He that believeth not is already judged." (John iii, 18)

"If you will not believe, you shall not continue." (Is. vii, 9)

"Faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God, and to be numbered among His children." (Trid. Counc., Sess. 6, c. 8)

"Faith is the source of justice, the principle of sanctity, from which all justice takes its beginning." (S. Aug.)

It is this active faith that has worked so many miracles and given courage to the martyrs. Consider what it does even in our day in so many holy souls, who unceasingly perform good works and forget nothing that would help them to gain Heaven.

II. WHAT THE FAITH OF THE GREATER NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS REALLY IS

1. Faith should be humble and submissive, and yet people wish to argue about everything; 2. It should be entire and universal, and yet people wish to believe only what pleases them; 3. It should be living and active, and yet people are unwilling to conform their lives to their belief, to live up to their faith. These are three great defects.

1. Our faith should make us believe with such a strength of conviction that we feel no further curiosity after having known Jesus Christ, nor search for further knowledge after having received the Gospel.

"When Christ has spoken, all curious questionings must cease; we need not be inquisitive when we know the Gospel." (Tert.)

And yet how many Christians there are, who guide themselves by the light of reason alone, without paying any attention to the word of God, rejecting that of which they are ignorant.

"These men blaspheme whatever things they know not." (Jude 10)

"Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain." (*Ibid.*, 11)

They will believe a thousand things in this world on the word of man; it is with God only they dare to dispute. They will give credence to an infinitude of things that are very uncertain; but they make it a false point of honor to remain incredulous regarding heavenly things.

"The faith of such wicked men approaches closely to that of the devils." (S. Aug.)

They are in a certain sense worse than the devils, for:

"The devils believe and tremble." (Jas. ii, 19)

"He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory." (Prov. xxv, 27)

"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." (1 John v, 9)

2. Faith should be entire and universal, yet there are those who, while they do not cast doubt on everything, believe only what pleases them; they are rash enough to make themselves the judges of religion. If they are in affliction, they say they do not believe there is a Providence. If they are reminded of the obligation of leading chaste lives, the virtue of chastity appears to them an idle fancy. When a temptation of the flesh solicits them to sin, they have doubts about the pains of hell. There are others who allow themselves to be carried away by novel opinions that flatter the corrupt inclinations of their hearts.

Ah! brethren, if a man wanted to steal your goods, what would you not do to prevent him? Have you anything more precious than your faith? Comply, then, with the advice which St. Jerome gave to one of his friends: "No matter who it is that proclaims new dogmas, I beseech you to preserve the faith that has been recommended by the mouth of the Apostle. Up to now the world has been Christian without this new doctrine. As an old man I will hold to that faith in which I was born."

"Be not led away with various and strange doctrines." (Heb. xiii, 9)

"In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one." (Eph. vi, 16)

3. Faith should be living and active, but there are those whose lives are not in conformity with their belief, who have only a dead faith. Nevertheless, "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? (Jas. ii, 14)

Far from justifying you before God, the faith which you have will serve only to make your condemnation more severe.

"Woe to thee, Corozain, . . . for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. . . . But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." (Matth. xi, 21, 24)

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." (John xv, 22)

Is it not an astonishing thing and a monstrous contradiction that, believing truths so terrible, you lead the same disorderly lives as the infidels do? A man believes, for example, that a single mortal sin is enough to condemn him to hell, and yet he spends his life in committing such sins. He believes that neither the avaricious nor the unchaste shall enter Heaven, and yet he abandons himself to these vices.

"They profess that they know God; but in their works they deny Him." (Tit. i, 16)

"Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." (Matth. viii, 13)

"He that believeth God, taketh heed to the commandments." (Eccli. xxxii, 28)

"With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x, 10)

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without good works is dead." (Jas. ii, 26)

"I will show thee, by works, my faith." (Jas. ii, 18)

"If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." (1 Cor. xiii, 12)

"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." (Matth. xvii, 19)

"He truly believes who, by good works, makes his life correspond to his belief." (S. Aug.)

"The Son of Man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (Luke xviii, 8)

"It is difficult for him who really believes, to lead a bad life." (S. Aug.)

"The house of God is founded on faith, built upon hope, and made perfect by charity." (S. Aug.)

"All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi, 22)

"Try yourselves if you be in the faith; prove ye yourselves." (2 Cor. xiii, 5)

"Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." (Luke xix, 22)

"Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i, 10)

"The just shall live in his faith." (Habac. ii, 4)

"In every place, your faith which is towards God is gone forth, so that we need not to speak anything . . . being mindful of the work of your faith." (1 Thess. i, 8, 3)

"I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief." (Mark ix, 23)

"Increase our faith." (Luke xvii, 5)

"Be of good cheer, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." (Matth. ix, 22)

Divisions

I. *Faith saves us,*

1°. As the perfection of our good works, because the good works

we practise, their efficacy and their reward, come especially from faith.

2°. As the principle of our good works, because the ardor that leads us to practise these works is inspired by faith.

II. *Faith condemns us,*

1°. Because we do not live according to its teaching, and because in sinning, (a) we keep it captive in injustice; (b) we deprive it of the fairest fruit of its fecundity, namely, good works; and (c) we at length cause it to die within us.

2°. How will it condemn us at the judgment of God? By convicting us of three things: (a) that we *could* have lived as Christians; (b) that we *should* have lived as Christians; (c) that we have *not* lived as Christians.

Faith consists in three things: in heartily believing with internal, firm, and resolute assent all that God has revealed; in professing with the mouth what we believe in our heart, with the strength and courage worthy of a Christian; and in showing our belief by our acts. I. Faith should dispose us to believe all the truths that Religion proposes to us; II. It should make us observe faithfully the teachings of Religion.

I. *Faith should dispose us to believe all the truths proposed to us.*

1. That faith may be a homage worthy of offering to God, and profitable to man, it should be:

1°. Firm, believing without hesitation,

2°. Simple, believing without question,

3°. Universal, believing all the truths revealed by God, without exception.

II. *Faith should make us observe faithfully the teachings of Religion.*

Faith should make us loyal. If it is not made manifest by works, it is dead. It is not, therefore, enough that it should exercise its power over our intellect, so as to make us believe the revealed truths; it should also influence our hearts, and cause us to observe all the commandments. Faith should be animated by good works, as these are animated by faith. Faith should, then, be *practical.* Good works are, therefore, necessary,

1°. To preserve the faith, for without the practice of good works it is very difficult to avoid falling into infidelity, which destroys faith,

2°. To render faith more efficacious and fruitful unto salvation. (Billot)

IV

THE WORD OF GOD

"The seed is the word of God." (Luke viii, 11)

The word of God is a seed which falls at one time on the roadside, that is, into dissipated hearts, at another among thorns, *i.e.,* the cares and troubles of this world, which destroy the fruit the holy word should produce. And again it falls on rocky places, *i.e.,* hardened hearts, in which the divine seed cannot take root. It is only in good ground, that is, in the hearts of those who hear the word of God with humble minds and receive it willingly, that it brings forth fruit in due time.

Let us consider the effects produced by the word of God in a well-disposed heart, and what preparation we should make to profit by it. I. The fruits and effects produced by the word. II. The dispositions with which it should be received.

I. THE FRUITS AND EFFECTS OF THE WORD OF GOD

The word of God is never without fruit.

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth and water it, and make it to spring, and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth. It shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in all the things for which I sent it." (Is. lv, 10, 11)

S. Paul points out in a special manner the benefit of the word of God:

"It is profitable, (1) to teach, (2) to reprove and correct, (3) to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." (2 Tim. iii, 16, 17)

This divine word, then, produces three great effects, which must be explained: It instructs the ignorant, it corrects sinners, and it makes perfect those who are already just.

1. *It is profitable to teach.*—It is the word of God that gives us light in the midst of the thick darkness in which we live. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths." (Ps. cxviii, 105)

What errors should we not fall into if we had not this light! We can judge of this by the errors and the infidelity of so many idolatrous

nations, to whom the Gospel has not been announced. The divine Word teaches us what we must believe and what we must do; it teaches us the duties of our state of life, the duties of parents, of children, of masters and mistresses, of merchants, of the rich, etc.

"Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of Christ. How shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x, 17 and 14)

"My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in shewing of the spirit." (1 Cor. ii, 4)

2. *To reprove and correct.*—It is the Word of God that calls the wandering sheep back to the fold, that withdraws the sinner from his disorderly life, and prevents the tongue of the slanderer from destroying his neighbor's character. This sacred word warns the voluptuous, whose days pass away in one continuous round of so-called pleasure, that effeminacy and sensuality are not without sin before God, and that He should fear lest that terrible word be fulfilled in him: "As much as she has lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii, 7)

No matter how insensible the sinner may be, the Word of God will touch him: "However cold or frozen or hard his heart may be, he need not be without hope." (S. Aug.)

"He shall send out His word and shall melt them: His wind shall blow and the waters shall run." (Ps. cxlvii, 18)

If he is a man steeped in sin, no matter; for "No heart is so hard that it cannot be softened by the mercy of God." (S. Aug.)

Our Lord Himself says: "Are not My words as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. xxiii, 29), and again: "Behold I will make My words in thy mouth as fire, and this people as wood, and it shall devour them." (Jer. v, 14)

"Every word of God is fire-tried: He is a buckler to them that hope in Him. Add not anything to His words lest thou be reproved and found a liar." (Prov. xxx, 5, 6)

"If thou give warning to the wicked, and he shall not be converted from his wickedness, and from his evil way: he indeed shall die in his iniquity." (Ezech. iii, 19)

If we have already the great happiness of walking in the way of salvation, the word of God produces a third effect, namely, it leads us on to perfection and to the practice of all good works.

3. *To instruct in justice.*—If we read the lives of the early Christians, the saints and martyrs, we shall see to what perfection the word of God conducted them. These words: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor," made St. Antony the most perfect of solitaries.

"For the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword: and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts." (Heb. iv, 12)

What is the edge of this spiritual sword? What divisions does it make? It separates the just from the wicked, the son from the father, the daughter from the mother. A boy wishes to consecrate himself to God, but his father forbids him to do so; the Word of God steps in. A girl desires to give her life to the service of Jesus Christ, but her mother is opposed to her doing so: the Word of God comes as a sword that separates the mother from the daughter. The sinner wishes to put away from him everything that is an obstacle to his salvation, but his friends try to prevent him: the word of God comes, it strikes his heart, and separates him from his bad companions.

"All My words are just, there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them. They are right to them that understand, and just to them that find knowledge." (Prov. viii, 8)

"The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. i, 16)

II. THE DISPOSITION WITH WHICH THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD BE RECEIVED

To benefit by the word of God, we should (1) hear it, (2) meditate on it, and (3) practice what it teaches.

1. We should *hear* it with attention and respect, seeing in the preachers only God, who speaks through them. The Thessalonians listened to S. Paul with respect and attention:

"Therefore we also give thanks to God without ceasing: because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, who worketh in you that you have believed." (1 Thess. ii, 13)

Is that the disposition of Christians of the present day? They go to hear sermons through curiosity or by chance; they go, not to receive instruction, but to criticise the preacher, perhaps even to turn him into ridicule: "They mocked the messengers of God." (2 Par. xxxvi, 16). They go to see and to be seen.

To listen to the word of salvation with faith and reverence is to see Jesus Christ in the person of him who preaches that word.

"We are not as many adulterating the word of God, but with sincerity, but as from God, before God, in Christ we speak." (2 Cor. ii, 17)

"For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us." (2 Cor. v, 20)

"Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv, 1)

"For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matth. x, 20)

That is what should cause us to listen to the word of God with respect.

"I have put My words in thy mouth." (Is. li, 16)

But alas! "Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Is. liii, 1)

"Children that will not hear the law of God." (*Ibid.* xxx, 9)

Saying: "Speak unto us pleasant things." (*Ibid.* v, 10) *And behold*: "They have hardened their necks, that they might not hear My words." (Jer. xix, 15)

"Behold the word of the Lord is become unto them a reproach: and they will not receive it." (*Ibid.* vi, 10)

"Be instant in season, out of season. . . . For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine: but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. iv, 2–4)

"He that despiseth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John, xii, 48)

"The word of God shall be your accuser." (S. Aug.)

"Many love the clear truth, but hate those who censure them." (S. Aug.)

Some are offended with the preacher because they feel themselves wounded by what he says.

"I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good to me, but evil." (3 Kings, xxii, 8)

"A general reproof hurts no one in particular." (S. Jerome)

"The words of the preacher bear no fruit unless the Holy Ghost touches the heart of the hearer." (S. Greg.)

2. But that is not enough; we must also *preserve* the word of God, *meditate* on it, *nourish our piety* with it, and *hide* it in our hearts.

"Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." (Ps. cxviii, 11)

The heart ought to be the repository of the divine Word, ought to taste it, meditate on it, make use of it, and apply it to itself: But have you placed it in *your* heart? What care have you taken to apply it to yourself? The preacher speaks against some vice. You attribute that vice to such or such a person, while "Thou art the man." (2 Kings, xii, 7)

It is thus that "The devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved." (Luke viii, 12)

"Lay up these My words in your hearts and minds, and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them before your eyes." (Deut. xi, 18)

"Nothing contributes so powerfully to purity of life and manners, or to diligence in the divine service, as an earnest desire to hear the word of God." (S. Chrys.)

"As a good appetite is a sign of the health of the body, so an earnest desire for the word of God shows the healthy state of the soul." (S. Chrys.)

"The word of God is the food of the soul." (S. Aug.)

"When you hear a sermon, never fail to carry away from it something that will strengthen your soul." (S. Chrys.)

"He preached well." "What did he say?" "Oh! I really do not remember!"

"What can a hearer be called but a scoffer or a ridiculous person, if he asserts that a preacher has spoken well, and at the same time confesses that he neither knows nor understands what the preacher has said?" (S. Chrys.)

3. We must hear the word of God and meditate on it; but the essential point is to *put it into practice.*

"Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke xi, 28)

"I praise you," said St. Bernard, "because you love to hear the word of God; but guard with care what you hear so willingly."

Herod heard him [John] freely; but when S. John said to him: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark vi, 18), he did not wish to hear more.

Do you wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ? "If you continue in My word, you will be my disciples indeed." (John viii, 31)

But to live in obedience to the word of God it is not enough simply to hear it, we must do what it commands. Do you do that?

"Every one, therefore, that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock." (Matth. vii, 24)

"Not the hearers of the word are justified before God: but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. ii, 13)

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (Jas. i, 22)

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, and I will send forth a

famine into the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of God." (Amos viii, 11)

"Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." (Matth. iv, 4)

"'Christ teaches; let us listen to Him with a holy fear and do what He tells us." (S. Aug.)

"Receive the ingrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." (Jas. i, 21)

"I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have labored in vain among you." (Gal. iv, 11)

It is so long since you heard a sermon! Tremble! "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected thee." (1 Kings, xv, 26)

You are like the captive Jews at Babylon:

"They hear Thy words and do them not; for they turn them into a song of their mouth." (Ezech. xxxiii, 31). They turn them into mockery.

"Why do you not know My speech? Because you cannot hear My word. . . . You are of your father, the devil. . . . He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God." (John viii, 43, 44 and 47)

"To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv, 8)

"They shall all be taught of God." (John vi, 45)

Divisions

The word of God does not produce fruit in our souls, (1) Because we do not receive it as His word; (2) Because by our own fault that holy word is without profit to us, and serves only to our condemnation. Bourdaloue)

I. It is foolish to imagine that we are saving our souls if we do not hear the word of God.

1°. We cannot be saved without a knowledge of the truth; it is the word of God which makes that truth known to us.

2°. We cannot be saved without loving the truth; it is the word of God that makes us love it. It enlightens our mind (*lucet*); it touches our heart (*movet*). (S. Aug.)

II. It is useless to listen to the word of God unless we have the dispositions necessary to profit by it.

1°. It is the word of God, not that of man, and therefore we must listen to it with respect.

2°. It is a means of sanctification and of salvation, and therefore we must listen to it with docility and with a sincere desire to profit by it. (Billuart)

Why does the word of God produce so little fruit?

1°. Because people come to hear a sermon without thinking of what they are about to do, and without any preparation.

2°. Because they assist at the sermon, as at a profane discourse, without reverence and without a desire to be instructed.

3°. Because they go away from the sermon as from a pleasure party, without entering into themselves, without meditating on the truths they have heard, and without striving to put these truths into practice.

V

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"There hath stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." (John i, 26)

Might not these words be addressed to the greater number of Christians in our day? . . . And yet we cannot avoid the presence of God, we cannot conceal ourselves from His sight. It is of that divine presence, fixed, unchangeable, proximate, and never interrupted, that I would speak to you to-day, and lay before you all its consequences and bearings. Consider I. The presence of God as the source of our sanctification; II. The presence of God as the source of our happiness.

I. THE PRESENCE OF GOD, SOURCE OF OUR SANCTIFICATION

Why are sins committed? Because the sinner forgets that God is present everywhere.

"Woe to you that are deep of heart. . . . And their works are in the dark, and they say: who seeth us and who knoweth us?" (Is. xxix, 15)

To avoid sin we must fear it and have the strength to resist it. But what is more capable of procuring for us this double advantage than the constant remembrance of the presence of God? (1) It makes us fear sin; (2) it gives us strength to overcome temptation.

1. *The thought of the presence of God makes us fear sin.* The presence of a wise and virtuous witness should prevent us from committing at least exterior sins. If this witness were personally interested in our actions, his presence would have a still greater influence in keeping us from wrong-doing; if he could see us and know what passes in our minds, we would not dare to entertain even a sinful thought in his presence. But if he were at the same time our master and our judge, what an irresistible influence his presence would have in keeping us from evil. Now, you have this interested, all-seeing dreaded witness always with you; and you commit sin because you forget that He is present.

"God is not before his eyes: his ways are filthy at all times." (Ps. x, 5)

"Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light." (John iii, 20)

"Although every one that does evil hates the light and seeks darkness, nevertheless no one can be hidden from God, who sees all things." (S. Innoc.)

The criminal always seeks a dark place in which to commit his crime:

"Behold the doors of the orchard are shut, and nobody seeth us." (Dan. xiii, 20)

The infamous old men had forgotten the presence of God; that is why they fell into sin:

"They turned away their eyes that they might not look into heaven." (Dan. xiii, 9)

No one sees us, the sinner says. But he is deceived; God sees him.

"I will search Jerusalem with lamps." (Sophon. i, 12)

"Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord judgeth the heart." (I Kings xvi, 7)

"The searcher of hearts and reins is God." (Ps. vii, 10)

"Thou hast observed all my paths, and hast considered the steps of my feet." (Job xiii, 27)

"He beholdeth the ends of the world: and looketh on all things that are under heaven." (Job xxviii, 24)

"I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee." (Job xlii, 2)

"The Lord hath looked down from heaven: He hath beheld all the sons of men." (Ps. xxxii, 13)

But it is not enough to say that God sees us, that God knows. No, He not only sees and knows, but He judges and condemns whatever He sees defective in us. Do not think that God will pass on you only after death the judgment with which He so often threatens us: "Now is the judgment of the world." (John xii, 31). He judges us every day and every hour. He has always in His hands the scales in which He weighs our words and deeds; and the judgment which He will pass on us after death will be only the execution of the different sentences which He has passed on us during life. He sees you, then, and He judges you, false and deceitful men, hypocrites, men plunged into the depths of effeminacy and voluptuousness. He sees you and He judges you, rich ones of this world, who are guilty in His sight.

"Great is the Lord, and of His greatness there is no end." (Ps. cxliv, 3)

"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven Thou art there; if I descend into hell Thou art present. If I take wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. cxxxviii, 7–10)

"The darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as

the day: the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee." (*Ibid.* 12)

"The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil." (Prov. xv, 3)

"All the ways of man are open to His eyes." (*Ibid.* xvi, 2)

"The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts." (Eccli. xxiii, 28)

"The works of all flesh are before Him, and there is nothing hid from His eyes." (*Ibid.* xxxix, 24)

"I fill heaven and earth." (Jer. xxiii, 24)

"The iniquity of the house of Israel is exceeding great; for they have said: The Lord seeth not." (Ezech. ix, 9)

"We should fear God at all times and in all places: Whether you go in or go out, whether you are in the light or in darkness, God sees you. Fear Him, then, who never loses sight of you for a moment. If you wish to commit sin, look for some place where God cannot see you, and if you find it, do as you wish." (S. Aug.)

"I say that God is all eyes, all hands, all feet; for He sees all things, does all things, and is present everywhere." (S. Aug.)

"When we do wrong we avoid the presence of men, but in the sight of God we do things that are unworthy of His infinite majesty." (S. Ambrose)

"We know that God is the Judge of all things, and yet we commit sin in His very presence." (S. Ambrose)

"Ponder deeply on the nature of God: it contains all things, fills all things, embraces all things, surpasses all things, and sustains all things." (S. Greg.)

"Unless you are a hypocrite, you must admit that the need of being upright and virtuous is very great, since you are in the presence of a Judge who sees all things." (Joel)

"Who would dare to do before the eyes of his prince that which is displeasing to him?" (S. Basil)

"Great care is necessary since you live in the presence of a Judge who sees all things." (S. Bernard)

"The mind that is occupied with the thought of God has little room for other thoughts, especially evil ones." (S. Ignatius)

"The more firmly we are convinced that God sees us, the more we shall check our audacity and keep from sin." (S. Ignatius)

2. *The thought of the presence of God gives us strength to overcome temptations.*

When the infamous old men said to the chaste Susanna: "No one

sees us," she answered them with courage: "It is better for me to fall into your hands than to sin in the sight of the Lord." (Dan. xiii, 23)

When Abraham lived among infidels, God proposed to him this thought of the divine presence as the means by which he would not only avoid being carried away by bad example, but would become perfect before God:—"Walk before Me, and be perfect." (Gen. xvii, 1)

King David says:

"I set the Lord always in my sight: for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved." (Ps. xv, 8)

The presence of God was for David not only a powerful motive to fear and avoid sin; he found in it also an unfailing source of strength, which enabled him to conquer sin. For God is with us not only as a Master and Judge; He is with us as our Protector and Support also.

"God is my protector and the horn of my salvation. Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies. The torrents of iniquity troubled me. . . . I called upon the Lord. (Ps. xvii, 3–7). The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvi, 1). "The Lord is nigh." (Phil. iv, 5). "He is not far from any of us: for in Him we live and move, and have our being." (Acts xvii, 27–28)

What excuse then can you give for your disorderly life? "Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself." (Is. xliii, 26)

What prevents you from having recourse to God?

"The eyes of the Lord behold all the earth and give strength to those who with a perfect heart trust in him." (2 Par. xvi, 9). "By faith Moses endured as seeing Him that is invisible." (Heb. xi, 27)

"It is certain that if we thought of God when we are tempted to sin, we would never do anything displeasing to Him." (S. Jerome)

"Remember God and you will not sin." (S. Ignatius)

"No one ever wavers if he considers that God is always present with him." (S. Clement)

"If we clearly understand and never forget that God is always present, and that He sees and judges all things, we shall seldom or never fall into sin." (S. Thomas)

"Our conscience will be a great check to us if we really believe that we are living in the sight of God." (Lactantius)

"The presence of God is a twofold check to sin, because God sees us and we see Him." (S. Ignatius)

"He is never absent, and yet He is far from the thoughts of the wicked; nevertheless He is never absent from the place from which He is far off, because where He is not present by His grace, He is present by His vengeance." (S. Greg.)

"The prodigal son fled to a far distant country, but did not escape the accusing eyes of his Father." (S. Chrys.)

"They say: The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth." (Ezech. viii, 12)

"They have said: The Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob understand. . . . You fools, be wise at last. He that hath planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider?" (Ps. xciii, 7–9)

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD, SOURCE OF OUR HAPPINESS

It is difficult to understand in this world that we can be happy in putting into practice the teaching of the Gospel; that is to say, in renouncing the vain pleasures of the world, in order to occupy ourselves with the affair of our eternal salvation. Such a life appears unhappy. Let us put away this false impression from our minds. The saints are not as unhappy as the world imagines, because (1) The presence of God satisfies all their desires, (2) makes up for all their losses, and (3) soothes all their pains.

1. *The Presence of God Satisfies All Desires.*

When we have learned to love God above all things, we are content to be always with Him, and we gladly forget all else to think only of His presence. Consider the hermits burying themselves in the solitude of the desert, and living there far away from the world. They were not alone. Their solitude was made happy by the constant thought of the presence of God. . . . Shall I abandon this solitary? God said, No: "We will come to him, and We will make Our abode with him." (John xiv, 23)

The unceasing cry of their hearts was: "My God and my All"; and they desired nothing more.

"For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God." (Ps. lxxii, 25–28)

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke xii, 34)

2. *The Presence of God Makes up for All Losses.*

The presence of men, as of temporal goods, is essentially limited, successive, and interrupted by long intervals. The presence of God is constant and perpetual. Of all the objects we may love, He is the only one from which it is absolutely certain we can never be separated.

Even death itself does not separate us from Him, but, on the contrary, draws us closer to Him. Why do you fear death? Because you are engaged in thinking only of earthly goods, which you must certainly lose at death. Imitate the saints by filling your hearts with the thought of the presence of God, and the fear of losing temporal goods will not trouble you. Nay, instead of dreading death, you will welcome it and say: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord." (Ps. cxxi, 1)

In the pains and agony of the last moment you will joyfully cry out: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." (Job xix, 25)

3. *The Presence of God Mitigates Sufferings.*

The thought of the divine presence is the great secret which enables the just to despise all the evils of this life. When the martyrs were threatened they replied: "No one can take my God from me; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. i, 21)

When the Empress Eudoxia threatened to send John Chrysostom into exile, the Saint said to her: "What! do you not know that God is everywhere?"

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." (Ps. xxiii, 1)

"[God] went down with him into the pit, and in bonds He left him not." (Wis. x, 14)

"I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii, 4)

What was it but the presence of the loving God, of whom they never lost sight, that gave the martyrs strength to endure unflinchingly the most frightful torments?

"In the fight which you wage with the devil you have as witnesses the angels and the Lord of angels." (S. Ephraim)

"To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee." (Ps. l, 6)

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." (Luke xv, 21)

"Stand before the Lord." (1 Kings x, 19)

"I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, because all my ways are in Thy sight." (Ps. cxviii, 168)

"I shall never cease to remember you, for you never cease to look on me." (S. Aug.)

"I have striven hard to find You outside Yourself, and yet if I desired You, I would find You dwelling in my heart." (*Ibid.*)

"Love the good that is in you." (*Ibid.*)

"Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. xxxiii, 9)

Divisions

I. *Effects Produced by the Thought of the Presence of God.*
This thought produces three impressions on the soul:
1°. An impression of humility and respect;
2°. An impression of resignation and confidence;
3°. An impression of infidelity and holy fear.

II. *Causes That Make Us Forget the Presence of God.*
The greater number of Christians do not place themselves in the presence of God:
1°. Because of the dissipation of their minds, which are filled with the thoughts of creatures only;
2°. Because the remembrance of the divine presence would disturb them in the midst of their sinful pleasures and amusements.

III. *Means by Which We Can Always Keep Ourselves in the Presence of God.*
1°. Recollection;
2°. Purity of heart;
3°. Allowing the thought of God's presence to influence all our actions.

Practice of the presence of God; its advantages:—
1. It turns us away from sin;
2. It strengthens us in the exercise of every virtue;
3. It causes us to conquer temptations, and to bear adversity, sickness, and disgrace with a holy patience.
4. It unites us to God as closely as we can be united to Him in this life, by producing in us a lively faith, an ardent charity, and a great conformity of thought, feeling, will, and affection.

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1. God is everywhere by His essence and His immensity; the sinner, therefore, commits his crimes in the very bosom of God.
2. God is everywhere by His power, with which He co-operates in all our thoughts, etc. He does not approve of what we do, but sustains us physically in the very act of sin; so that when we commit sin, we make use of His own power to offend Him.
3. He is everywhere present, and sees all things; so we have at all times and in all places a Judge and a Witness from whom we cannot conceal ourselves nor escape.

VI

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

"I have compassion on the multitude." (Mark vii, 2)
"Know ye that no one has hoped in the Lord and has been confounded." (Eccli. ii, 11)

God governs all things. Nothing occurs except by His order or permission. We must, therefore, place all our confidence in His Divine Providence. To induce you to do this I will show you: I. What the Providence of God does for mankind; II. What we should do to correspond to His loving care.

I. WHAT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD DOES FOR MANKIND

1. There is a Providence that rules all things and provides for the needs of all. Reason as well as faith proves this. All nature proclaims that there is a Providence which rules and sustains it in that beautiful order which we admire in it. But it is over the needs of man especially that this Divine Providence extends its paternal care. God knows all we require, and He provides for all. What a motive of unbounded confidence this should be for us!

"He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear?" (Ps. xciii, 9)

"He reacheth therefore from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly." (Wis. viii, 1)

Proof from the Gospel:

"I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint in the way." (Mark viii, 2, 3). How many other miracles prove this truth!

"Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moths consume. . . . Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." (Matth. vi, 19, 25, 32)

"All thy ways are prepared, and in Thy Providence Thou hast placed Thy judgments." (Judith ix, 5)

"There is no other God but Thou who hast care of all." (Wis. xii, 13)

"But Thy Providence, O Father, governeth it." (*Ibid.* xiv, 3)

God compares Himself to a father and to a mother:

"As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him: for He knoweth our frame." (Ps. cii, 13, 14)

"Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Is. xlix, 15)

"Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight." (Wis. xi, 21)

"As Thou are just, Thou orderest all things justly." (*Ibid.* xii, 15)

"He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all." (*Ibid.* vi, 8)

"Who provideth food for the raven when her young ones cry to God, wandering about, because they have no meat." (Job. xxxviii, 41)

And what takes place every day before our eyes? Do we not see that all the cares of Providence are, so to speak, combined for the sake of man? The fire gives him warmth; the air, the water, the earth, all are for his use.

"Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature. Thou hast given them meat in due season." (Ps. cxliv, 15, 16)

"He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc, 11)

The help which man receives from the lower animals, the remedies supplied to him by nature, the dangers of every kind from which God preserves him, the benefits which He heaps on him, all these are so many proofs of Divine Providence.

"The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture." (Ps. xxii, 1, 2). For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (*Ibid.* 4). "Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life." (*Ibid.* 6)

"The clouds are His covert [the impious say], and He doth not consider our things, and He walketh about the poles of heaven." (Job xxii, 14)

"They [the wicked] have said: The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and, The Lord seeth not." (Ezech. ix, 9)

O foolish men!

2. But, it may be said, how can we reconcile with the care of Providence so much *disease,* so many *evils?* Why do some suffer more than others? Why do good Christians suffer while the wicked prosper?

"Thou indeed, O Lord, art just; . . . why doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jer. xii, 1)

Do you not know that man has sinned and therefore "deserves to suffer these things"? (Gen. xlii, 21)

Moreover, if God strikes even the just, we should recognize in that His wisdom and goodness. Without suffering their hearts would become attached to things of earth, and they would forget their last end. And, then, God reserves another reward for them.

"Lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul." (Wis. iv, 11)

"Every sinner lives in order either that he may amend his life, or that the just man may be exercised (and gain more merit) through him." (S. Aug.)

"Moreover, in God's dealings with us there are many things which we cannot see clearly; whether it is that He wishes to check our pride, or to raise our minds to heavenly and eternal things." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"The more human help fails, the more strongly should we hope in the divine mercy." (S. Ambrose)

If you are scandalized at the prosperity of the wicked, remember that, "Though thou be exalted as an eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Abd. 4)

"Seek not the things that are too high for thee, . . . for it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes those things that are hid." (Eccli. iii, 22, 23)

The wicked receive their reward in this life.

"I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus; [but] I passed by, and, lo, he was not; and I sought him, and his place was not found." (Ps. xxxvi, 35, 36)

II. WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO RESPOND TO GOD'S LOVING CARE

We can consider the Providence of God either (1) with reference to the benefits we are receiving or may receive from it, or (2) with reference to the evils with which it afflicts us. We should be grateful to God for the benefits He has bestowed on us, and have a firm confidence that He will give us others. We should submit to His holy will and receive with loving resignation the trials He sends us.

1. We are indebted to God's Providence for everything we possess. We experience at each instant His goodness, His care, His watchfulness. What can be more just than that we should show an all-inclusive and constant gratitude for these favors—a universal gratitude that extends to all the benefits we receive; an unceasing gratitude, which is never interrupted and ends only with the last breath of life? In fact,

our gratitude ought to be proportioned to the benefits we receive. We should then feel as David felt:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name." (Ps. cii, 1)

"Casting all your care upon him, for He hath care of you." (1 Pet. v, 7)

But what gratitude do we show to God for His blessings? If we are sick or afflicted, we pray to Him; but if He graciously hears us, we never think of thanking Him. Some even make use of His favors to inflict outrages on Him. Let us not act in this way; on the contrary, let us say with David:

"I will bless the Lord at all times." (Ps. xxxiii, 1)

"Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." (Ps. liv, 23)

2. With regard to the evils with which He afflicts us:

"I have not seen the just forsaken nor his seed wanting bread." (Ps. xxxvi, 25)

If God has afflicted you, it is either because your confidence has not been strong and full, or because your life has not merited His favors, or because those things for which you asked would not help you in saving your soul, or, finally, because you have had recourse to God only after having experienced the weakness of human help. Should you be astonished that God has rejected you and sent you back to the strange gods in whose help you trusted?

"Where are their gods in whom they trusted? . . . Let them arise and help them." (Deut. xxxii, 37, 38)

"The Lord of hosts hath decreed, and who can disannul it?" (Is. xiv, 27)

"Who are you that tempt the Lord?" (Judith viii, 11)

Be resigned, then, to His holy will.

"For Thou [God] art not delighted in our being lost; because after a storm Thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness." (Job iii, 22)

"As for us, therefore, let us not revenge ourselves for these things which we suffer, but, esteeming these very punishments to be less than our sins deserve, let us believe that these scourges of the Lord, with which like servants we are chastised, have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction." (Judith viii, 26, 27)

Be assured that God is not pleased with an idle confidence which does not lift a hand to second His designs. ("God helps those who help themselves.")

God wishes that our confidence in Him should banish from our hearts

all undue anxiety regarding the necessities of this life; but He requires on our part a reasonable care for the success of temporal affairs.

You do your part, and yet God afflicts you! Be resigned and adore the hand that strikes you.

"The Lord killeth and maketh alive; the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich." (1 Kings ii, 6, 7)

It is not for you to demand from Him an account of what He is pleased to do. You say you do not know why He afflicts you?

"Thou shalt know hereafter." (John xiii, 17)

"If we have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job ii, 10)

"Do not say: There is no Providence; lest God be angry at thy words and destroy all the works of thy hands." (Eccles. v, 5)

On the contrary, say: "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom." (Ps. ciii, 24)

"In Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed." (Ps. xxiv, 2)

"My soul trusteth in Thee." (Ps. lvi, 1)

"Not my will but Thine be done." (Luke xxii, 42)

"Have a firm trust in God, and place yourself entirely in His hands as far as you can do so. He does not permit anything to happen to you but what is for your good, even though you may not know it to be so." (S. Aug.)

Divisions

Our duty and our interest require us to recognize a Providence and to submit to it.

1. *Lawlessness* of man in regard to his duty.

There is nothing more criminal than the conduct of the man who is unwilling to submit to the Providence of God. He denies that Providence either

1°. By his spirit of *infidelity,* because he does not acknowledge it, or does not believe in it; or,

2°. By a *rebellion* of soul, because, while acknowledging it and believing in it, he will not yield the submission which is due to it.

2. There is no creature more *unhappy* than he who does not submit to the guidance of Divine Providence. For then

1°. He remains without guidance.

2°. In abandoning God he forces God to abandon him.

3°. He deprives himself of the sweetest, or rather of the only consolation he can have in adversity.

4°. Unwilling to submit freely and lovingly to God, he is compelled to submit to Him.

No greater outrage can be offered to God than to distrust His Providence.

2. There is nothing more useless than to oppose that Providence.

3. Nothing conduces more to our happiness than perfect submission to and confidence in Divine Providence.

VII

THE MERCY OF GOD

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix, 10)

Our Lord has made known in several parables how great is His mercy. But there are some Christians who do not put sufficient trust in His mercy, and there are others who rely too much on it. Let us show the one class how great this mercy is, and point out to the other what it demands of them. I. What the mercy of God does for sinners; II. What sinners should do to correspond to God's mercy.

I. WHAT THE MERCY OF GOD DOES FOR SINNERS

Everything is sweet and consoling in the course which God in His mercy takes in dealing with sinners: He waits for them, invites them, and receives them.

1. *God waits for sinners to repent,* and that by a pure effect of His mercy.

"The Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you." (Is. xxx, 18)

The creatures demand vengeance: "Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?" No, replied the Lord, "Suffer both to grow until the harvest." (Matth. xiii, 30)

"Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground? . . . Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it. And if happily it bear fruit: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." (Luke xiii, 7–9)

"O Lord, I was going away and flying farther and farther from Thee, and Thou didst not withdraw from me." (S. Aug.)

"The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9)

To-day also God awaits the sinner and punishes only with regret.

"Touched with sorrow of heart, He says:—I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth." (Gen. vi, 7). "That the bitterness of our sins may be expressed." (S. Aug.)

"I will destroy." He speaks in the future to show that He gives sinners time to appease His anger.

"They waited for the patience of God in the days of Noë, when the ark was a building." (1 Pet. iii, 20)

"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion." (Exod. xxxiv, 6)

"O how good and sweet is Thy spirit, O Lord, in all things! And therefore Thou chastisest them that err, by little and little; and admonishest them and speakest to them, concerning the things wherein they offend; that leaving their wickedness, they may believe in Thee, O Lord." (Wis. xii, 1–2)

"The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed; because His commiserations have not failed." (Lam. iii, 22)

"God endured with much patience vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." (Rom. ix, 22)

"Mercy exalteth itself above judgment." (Jas. ii, 13)

"The mercy of God is so great that it cannot be explained in any words, understood by any created intelligence, or conceived by any mind. It is above human reason." (S. Chrys.)

2. *God invites sinners to do penance.*

"[Jerusalem], thou has prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless return to Me, and I will receive thee, saith the Lord." (Jer. iii, 1)

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burthened and I will refresh you." (Matth. xi, 28)

Think of Our Saviour seeking for the lost sheep. See how His heart is filled with compassion for all sinners.

"I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners." (Matth. ix, 13)

"Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings." (Math. xxiii, 37)

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." (Jer. xxxi, 3)

It is this same mercy that is constantly urging and entreating sinners to do penance; and if they return to God and correspond faithfully with His graces,—

3. *He receives them back into His friendship, and pardons them without delay.*

"For He is bountiful to forgive." (Is. lv, 7)

See the proof of this in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

"He wasted his substance living riotously . . . and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. . . . And returning to himself he said . . . I will arise and will go to my father.

. . . And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. . . . The father said: Bring forth quickly the first robe," etc. (Luke xv, 13 sqq.). "It was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost and is found." (*Ibid.* 32)

Consider the application of this parable. As soon as the sinner forms the resolution to return to God and to abandon sin, Almighty God sees him afar off and runs to meet him, by strengthening him with grace; He embraces him by filling him with consolation, and re-establishes him in a state of grace by pardoning all his sins.

"Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded." (Eccli. ii, 11)

"Ye that fear the Lord believe Him; and your reward shall not be made void." (Eccli. ii, 8)

"Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." (Tit. iii, 5)

"Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men, for the sake of repentance." (Wis. xi, 24)

Sinners, see how the mercy of God deals with you. See what great cause you have for placing full confidence in Him. But lest that confidence should degenerate into presumption, consider

II. WHAT SINNERS SHOULD DO TO CORRESPOND TO GOD'S MERCY

Sinners, (1) the mercy of God awaits you: you must not try His patience too far; (2) His mercy calls and lovingly invites you: you should listen to it and run to meet it; (3) it receives you and pardons you: you should remain faithful.

1. The mercy of God bears with and waits for you, and you add sin to sin. God has been waiting for you many years. He is always near you in order to give you an opportunity of returning to Him. If you do not seize this opportunity, there is perhaps only one small thread by which mercy holds back the sword of His vengeance; and if that thread snaps asunder, the time of repentance is gone forever. Shall it be said, then, that because God is waiting for you, you will never do penance?

"Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every one according to his works." (Rom. ii, 4–6)

In reality, what hardness of heart can equal that of a man who is not touched at the sight of the goodness and mercy of God waiting until the sinner repents? God has done all He could for the salvation of the sinner. He has given him faith, and has taught him to distinguish good from evil; He has made known to him the riches of His divine mercy, in order to draw him to Himself; and that the sinner may be moved to repentance through fear, if not through love, God threatens him with the rigors of His judgments. And yet the sinner is not converted. "Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath."

"The mercy of the Lord is from eternity unto eternity, [but only] upon them that fear Him." (Ps. cii, 17)

"The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him; and on them that hope in His mercy." (Ps. xxxii, 18)

"Say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners." (Eccli. v, 5, 7)

"God knows how to alter His sentence, if you know how to change your life." (S. Jerome)

"They abuse the patience of God, and while their conscience tells them they are not free from sin, they come to feel safe through long impunity, though God postpones His vengeance only to give them time for repentance." (S. Leo)

2. His mercy calls and lovingly invites you: you must go to meet it.

There is a law according to which God wishes to show you mercy: "Have mercy on me according to Thy law." (S. Ambrose). That law is the union of your will with the will of God. He desires to save you, but you yourself must desire it also. "He who created you without your help will not save you without your help." (S. Aug.) He holds out His hand to us, we must give ours to Him. He demands from us a will which corresponds to the eagerness of His mercy, a will that makes us say with S. Paul:

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6)

God goes after sinners and calls them even when they are persecuting Him. Sinners, how often have you not heard the voice of God in your hearts at the very moment you were offending Him? How many times, when there was question of perpetrating an injustice or indulging in an impure act, did not God say to you: My child, why do you persecute me? "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts ix, 5)

What should you do in such circumstances?

"Thou shalt call me and I will answer Thee: to the work of Thy hands Thou shalt reach out Thy right hand. Thou indeed hast numbered my steps, but spare my sins." (Job xiv, 15–16)

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: seek Thy servant." (Ps. cxviii, 176)

"How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him." (Eccli. xvii, 28)

"God spares you that you may amend your lives, not that you may continue in sin." (S. Aug.)

"A presumptuous confidence in God deserves His vengeance rather than His mercy." (S. Greg.)

"God saw their works, that they were turned from their evil way; and God had mercy with regard to the evil which He had said that He would do to them, and He did it not." (Jonas iii, 10)

"Return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee." (Jer. iii, 1)

"I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezech. xxxiii, 11)

3. Finally, when God receives back and pardons the sinner, the sinner on his side should remain faithful unto death. He should not relapse into his former sins; but, filled with a lively gratitude, he should always remember what the mercy of God has done for him; and he should always praise the name of the Lord, who has caused His infinite goodness to shine forth in withdrawing him from the abyss into which sin had plunged him.

"I will glorify Thy name for ever; for Thy mercy is great towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell." (Ps. lxxxv, 12–13)

"The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever." (Ps. lxxxviii, 1)

Have a firm hope in the mercy of God, you who are free from sin; but persevere in grace, so that God may crown all His gifts to you by rewarding your merits. Sinners, do you also hope in God; but do penance. To do penance without hope is the destiny and the punishment of the evil spirits; to hope without doing penance is the presumption of libertines.

"Let not this great hour of mercy pass away from you without fruit; for the judgment of God is approaching, and then there will be repentance, but it will be too late. A time will come when there will be no room for salutary repentance, or for hope in God, for the fountains of His mercy will be dried up." (S. Bern.)

"For as much as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg His pardon." (Judith viii, 14)

"God, as you say, has promised to forgive you if you repent, but has He promised you tomorrow if you defer your conversion? He opens

a secure harbor of repentance for those who are in danger of perishing through despair; but because of those who are shipwrecked by delay, He has made the hour of death uncertain." (S. Aug.)

"My God, my life, who didst pursue me when I was forgetful of Thee." (S. Aug.) "Have mercy on me . . . according to Thy great mercy." (Ps. l, 1)

"I cried to Thee, O Lord, I said: Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living." (Ps. cxli, 6)

Divisions

I. No one should *presume on the mercy of God* in order to commit sin,

1°. Because such resumption is in itself absolutely rash;

2°. It is usually fatal to the sinner;

3°. It is always very offensive to God.

II. When the sinner seriously begins the work of his conversion, he should never despair of the mercy of God,

1°. Because God seeks us;

2°. He knows all our misery;

3°. He wishes to pardon us, though we are sinners.

God in His mercy for sinners

1. Waits for them patiently; they should not abuse His mercy by wearing out the patience with which He waits.

2. Forgives them with generosity; they should not cause pain or sorrow to that mercy which feels a great joy at their return.

3. Protects them with infinite power; they should never separate themselves from that mercy which guards them with so great care.

There is no attribute of God more worthy of our love than His mercy and His patience in bearing with sin and awaiting the return of the sinner.

1. He pretends, as it were, not to notice our sins: "Thou overlookest the sins for the sake of repentance." (Wis. xi, 24)

2. He not only overlooks sin, but sometimes even excuses it.

3. When He can neither overlook nor excuse it, He shows His patience by bearing with the sinner and waiting for his return.

4. When He is forced to think of vengeance, He threatens beforehand.

5. When the sinner is not touched by those menaces, God looks for souls to appease Him, to place themselves between His anger and the sinner.

6. When at length He is obliged to punish, He punishes with regret, "touched with grief." (Nepveu, *Pensées Chrétiennes.*)

VIII

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John i, 16)

When the time appointed by God from all eternity to redeem man and give a Saviour to the world had arrived, the angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary. . . . "And the Word was made flesh." Let us strive to penetrate, as far as faith permits, the profound depths of this mystery, to discover therein the excess of love which God has manifested for us. But we must not be content with fruitless speculation; we must force ourselves to show to God the deep gratitude which so great a love deserves from us. I. What has been the love of God for man in the mystery of the Incarnation? II. What should be our love for the Son of God made Man?

I. WHAT HAS BEEN THE LOVE OF GOD FOR MAN IN THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

1. What is the Incarnation? You profess full belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Let us enter into this mystery of charity, which God has manifested to men: "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." (Tit. iii, 4). Let us see in it (1) the most compassionate love which has caused God to free us from the state of misery to which sin had reduced us; (2) the most generous love which led Him to sacrifice all for our deliverance.

1. *The Most Compassionate Love*

Let us call to mind the sad state to which sin had reduced us.

"By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death." (Rom. v, 12)

When we became children of wrath, Heaven was closed against us; we were condemned to death, and to all the other miseries which accompany the sad condition of man. What would have become of us if God, touched by our misery, had not stretched out His hand to draw us out of the abyss into which we had fallen?

"Who hath washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Apoc. i, 5)

"He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people." (Luke i, 69)

"When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv, 4, 5)

"Who for us men, and for our salvation descended from heaven." (Creed)

"The unsearchable riches of Christ . . . and the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God." (Eph. iii, 8, 9)

"By love the invisible God has become like to His slaves." (S. Aug.)

"O wonderful condescension! O supreme humility! O unlooked for charity! O stupendous love! When slime is united to God, when the Highest becomes the lowest, when the Strongest becomes weak." (S. Bonav.)

2. The Most Generous Love

What price does He not give for our ransom? Who could give to the justice of God that satisfaction which He rigorously demanded. . . . Man himself could not give it. "He shall not give to God his ransom." (Ps. xlviii, 8). He could not have recourse to his fellow-men: "No brother can redeem" (*Ibid.*); nor to the angels. Yet

"Such was the nature of sin that man only could atone for it; because it was man who had sinned. It was therefore necessary that He who was God should become man." (S. Aug.)

But Jesus Christ became man, and in His person, "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed." (Ps. lxxxiv, 11)

"They have had each his rights: mercy has pardoned guilty man, and justice has been satisfied. And so earth has been reconciled to Heaven, man to God.

Is there not here the proof of a most generous love on the part of God? . . . When God created man one word of His was sufficient:

"Let us make man to Our image and likeness." (Gen. i, 26)

But to redeem him it cost the Eternal Father His only-begotten Son: "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son." (John iii, 16)

"Who emptied Himself taking the form of a servant." (Phil. ii, 7)

"Wherefore when He cometh unto the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold, I come . . . that I should do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x, 5–7)

What an excess of God's love for man! Could angels or men ever

have imagined such an expedient? And if God had permitted us to demand our ransom at so great a price, should we ever have dared to carry our hopes so far?

"Why did Christ . . . die for the ungodly? For scarce for a just man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some one would dare to die. But God commendeth His charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us." (Rom. v, 6–9)

"O inestimable love of charity! To redeem a slave thou hast delivered up the Son of God." (S. Greg.)

"He [Christ] comes as a physician to those who are sick, as a redeemer to those who are sold, as life to the dead." (S. Bern.)

II. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR LOVE FOR THE SON OF GOD MADE MAN

What love! Was there ever love more compassionate or generous? What should be our love for a God made man? Love is repaid only by love. "Let us therefore love God because God hath first loved us." (John iv, 19)

This immense love of God demands from us (1) a tender and grateful love in return for His favors; (2) a generous love that makes us submit to His will.

1. What should be our gratitude to a rich man who delivered us from prison! What should it be if this rich man took our punishment on himself in order to set us free, if he offered to die in order to save our life? What do I say? Though he were only a man like ourselves, even the poorest of men, to whom we were indebted for liberty and life, . . . what should not our gratitude be! But, as you know, it is not simply a man, it is not a prince or king of this world, it is the only-begotten Son of the Most High who has delivered us.

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ." (1 Pet. i, 18, 19)

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." (Coloss. i, 13)

But what ingratitude! "There hath stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." (John i, 26)

To this love of God we return only insults and outrages! And nevertheless

"This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii, 3)

2. A generous love, in sacrificing our hearts to Him by a perfect obedience to His laws. He does not ask for worldly goods: "Thou

hast no need of my goods." (Ps. xv, 2). He demands our hearts: "My son, give me thy heart." (Prov. xxiii, 26)

In order to gain our hearts, He made Himself like to us. "Being made in the likeness of men." (Phil. ii, 7)

But what did not this act of humility cost Him? He despoiled Himself of His grandeur in order to clothe Himself with our vileness. He submitted to the rigorous commands of His Father not only by appearing as a sinner, but by being treated as one, loaded with all the iniquities of the world. Is not this paying very dearly for our love? And has He not the right to demand our whole being, since He has given Himself entirely to us?

"He who redeemed me wholly by His entire self demands my whole being." (S. Bern.)

We must then consecrate to Him all the movements of our heart; we must detach our heart from everything that would dispute with Him the possession of it; banish from it sin and everything that can be an occasion of sin; resist those perverse inclinations that draw us to creatures, sacrifice this passion that dominates us, this resentment that makes us bitter.

"You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is all goodness, and justice, and truth; proving what is well-pleasing to God." (Eph. v, 8–10)

Is it possible that a God should have done so much to destroy the reign of sin in us, and that we should yet allow ourselves to be ruled by it? Is it possible that He should have broken our chains, and that we should again deliver ourselves to bondage?

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John vi, 69)

"My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready." (Ps. lvi, 8)

Divisions

The Incarnation is the mystery of the goodness and love of God for man. By the Incarnation of the Word we became children of God. Because the Divine Word could not clothe Himself with the flesh of man without contracting the closest relationship with men, and from the moment He so united us with Himself that we make only one body with Him, we can say, in the true and real sense, that we are *children of God.* This being so, let us consider, (1) what we owe to God; (2) what we owe to ourselves.

1. As children of God we owe to Him *obedience* to His commands and *zeal* for His glory. Without that, what will it avail us to call Him

our Father? If this obedience and this zeal cause us suffering, they have caused Christ more and much greater suffering.

2. As children of God we should not degrade our noble position by conduct which makes us unworthy of it. (Bourdaloue, Second Sermon on the Incarnation.)

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1. A God who has humbled Himself so much, renders humiliations honorable.

2. A God overwhelmed with sorrow renders sufferings desirable.

3. A God united to man strikes reason dumb and makes faith reasonable. (Massillon)

The mystery of the Incarnation is,

1. A *mystery of justice* that renders perfect honor to the Majesty of God, and to His holiness all the satisfaction it demands for sin.

2. A *mystery of salvation* and *peace,* which restores to man his claim to eternal happiness.

IX

OBLIGATION OF KNOWING JESUS CHRIST

"The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." (John i, 10)

The blindness of the Jews has come down to us. Jesus Christ is in the midst of us in a more striking manner than He was among the Jews during His mortal life. But is He known, served and adored as He should be? I. Obligation of knowing Jesus Christ; II. The greater number do not know Him.

I. WE MUST SEEK TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST

Faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ are the beginning, the foundation of religion.

"For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii, 11)

"This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii, 3)

We must then know Jesus Christ; and what must we know of Him? Two things at least: (1) What He is; (2) what He has done for us.

1. *What He is*

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who became man, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, equal to Him in power.

According to His ministry He is our Redeemer. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son." (John iii, 16)

Jesus Christ became the Redeemer not of the angels, but of men. "For nowhere doth He take hold of the angels; but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold." (Heb. ii, 16)

What gratitude is there not demanded from us by a preference which is so advantageous to us?

"He seized hold of the human race that was wandering farther and farther away from Him." (S. Aug.)

He is the Good Shepherd, who, having one hundred sheep, left ninety-nine of them in the desert, that is, the angels in Heaven, to come on earth and seek the lost sheep, that is, fallen man. He is the Good

Samaritan that had pity on the wounded man (Luke x, 30). Who is this wounded man? It is he whom sin has wounded.

"The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." (Luke xix, 10)

"A great physician came from Heaven because on earth man was lying sick unto death." (S. Aug.)

That is the character of the Divine Redeemer, that is the idea which we should form of Him. He is a God full of love and goodness.

"As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you." (John xv, 9)

"He hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii, 9)

Do we wish for a convincing proof of His love for us? Let us consider the price He paid for our ransom.

2. *What He has done for us*

What was the price of our redemption, and what should we know regarding it? Consider what St. Paul says of it.

"Giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sin" (Col. i, 12–14), "making peace through the blood of His cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (*Ibid.* v, 20)

"O precious price paid for those who were lost! Great was my iniquity, but greater was Thy redemption." (S. Aug.)

"The charity of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v, 14)

The charity of Christ demands that we turn our hearts to Him. But how can we know that the charity of Jesus Christ presses us if we do not know that charity? Woe to us if we neglect to gain a knowledge of it! Because without that knowledge we shall never have part in the salvation and the grace of the Redeemer.

Ignorance of the essential truths of faith, and especially of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, is inexcusable, and those who sin through ignorance because they have neglected to learn the things they should know, are not to be excused any more than the Scribes and the Pharisees.

II. THE GREATER PART OF MANKIND DO NOT KNOW JESUS CHRIST

The world does not know Christ. The greater number of men have no faith at all, or at least they have only a very imperfect faith. They say they believe in God; why, then, do they not believe in Jesus

Christ, His Son, by and in whom He wishes to be believed, known, served and adored? "You believe in God, believe also in Me." (John xiv, 1). Nevertheless, it is this faith in Christ which is unknown, or which is sometimes even denied.

1. It is *unknown*: "For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii, 8)

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii, 8); and they did not understand this.

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling, and unto the gentiles foolishness." (1 Cor. i, 23) And this ignorance reigns in the world even in our day; there are many who are learned and enlightened, but "This is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish, for they are liars against the truth." (Jas. iii, 15, 14)

How many there are who have no idea of Jesus Christ or of His teaching, who sell their souls to the evil spirit for a little gold. Would they act thus if they considered that

"You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." (1 Pet. i, 18–19)

They call themselves Christians, and they know nothing of the life of Christ. His holy mysteries are celebrated, and people pay no attention to them. They do not desire to be instructed in them. Is there a play, a worldly assembly, they hasten to it with joy. If a preacher speaks of Jesus Christ, they quit the church as soon as possible, or if through a kind of propriety they remain there, they listen to the sermons and instructions with weariness and dislike. . . . Is it astonishing if faith in Jesus Christ is so little known in the world?

"Who have said to God [and to His priests]: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." (Job xxi, 14)

"Who as it were on purpose have revolted from Him, and would not understand all His ways." (Job xxxiv, 27)

2. This faith is even *contradicted*.—"There is a great difference between believing that Jesus Christ is the God-Man, and putting one's trust in Him." (S. Aug.) Belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ is common to all Christians. But to believe in Him so as to put all trust in Him, that is, to be guided by His Gospel, to love His teaching, to submit to His law, it is with this that the daily life of the world is inconsistent.

"They profess that they know God; but in their works they deny Him." (1 Tit. i, 16)

Christ says: "The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence. . . . Narrow is the way that leads to life. . . . If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me"; that is to say, we should imitate Him, speak, act, and live as He. Does the world understand this teaching, does it follow it, does it practise it?

Nevertheless it is God who speaks and commands, and whom we are bound to obey.

"Where is the Catholic law which they believe? Where are the precepts of chastity and piety which they learn? They read the Gospel and lead impure lives; they hear the Apostles and are guilty of drunkenness; they call themselves followers of Christ and they steal; they lead wicked lives and say they possess a holy law." (Salvian)

Is that putting trust in Jesus Christ?

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. . . . The light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John i, 11, 5)

"There hath stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." (John i, 26)

Let it not be so with us.

"I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." (Gal. ii, 20)

Such should be our confidence in this adorable Redeemer: a confidence which should animate a Christian in the midst of the world, when his salvation appears to be in the greatest danger.

"I will not leave you orphans." (John xiv, 18)

"Have confidence, I have overcome the world." (John xvi, 33)

"This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii, 3)

"Seek ye the Lord while He can be found." (Is. lv, 6)

"And you shall find rest to your souls." (Matth. xi, 29)

"You therefore, brethren, . . . grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii, 17–18)

"I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii, 2)

Divisions

I. Every man naturally desires knowledge, and the intellect of man applies itself especially to gain information concerning that which is most beautiful and perfect, the knowledge of which is more certain, more advantageous. But there is no science more deserving of earnest study than the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His teaching.

1°. Is there any object more beautiful, more perfect, than Christ?

2°. Is there anything more certain than what faith teaches us concerning Him?

3°. Is there any knowledge more profitable, more capable of leading the heart and soul of man to perfection?

4°. In a word, is there anything more indispensable than the knowledge of Jesus Christ?

II. What qualities should our knowledge of Christ possess? It should be,

1°. Serious and considerate, instructing us, as much as possible, in all that concerns the life and doctrine of Our Lord.

2°. Full of love and affection; it is not a purely speculative knowledge; it ought to be in the heart more than in the intellect.

3°. It should have a practical influence on our lives: "He who saith that he knoweth Him [God], and doth not keep His commandments, is a liar." (1 John ii, 4). "By this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments." (*Ibid.* 3)

X

DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

"That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts." (Eph. iii, 17)

The Christian life consists in our possessing Jesus Christ in our hearts by faith; but to possess Him in this way we must love His cross and passion. Those who take pleasure in the follies of the world must have forgotten Christ crucified; for the remembrance of that suffering Redeemer is sufficient to inspire us with horror of everything that would offend Him. We should frequently make His sufferings the subject of our meditation, for of all devotions such meditation is, I. The most pleasing to God; II. The most beneficial to a Christian.

I. MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST IS MOST PLEASING TO GOD

That which generally occupied the thoughts of our Divine Lord, of His Blessed Mother, and of the saints, is beyond doubt most pleasing in the sight of God. But meditation on the passion of Christ has been the great occupation of our adorable Saviour, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the saints.

1. Christ not only suffered joyfully the death of the cross: "Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii, 2); but He took pleasure in thinking of it all His life: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." (Luke xii, 50)

See how in the Gospel He relates to His Apostles all the circumstances of His passion and death:

"He shall be delivered to the gentiles to be mocked, and spat upon and scourged . . . after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death . . . and on the third day He will rise again." (Mark x, 34). He has no sooner assumed human nature, than He begins to think how He should one day be immolated for the salvation of sinners:

"A body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Then said I: Behold I come." (Heb. x, 5, 7)

He said by the mouth of the prophet:

"My life is wasted with grief, and my tears in sighs." (Ps. xxx, 11)

Hence His question to the sons of Zebedee: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matth. xx, 22)

Thus you see that the passion of Christ did not occupy His thoughts merely in a passing way, or from time to time; He had it always before His mind, He was constantly thinking of it.

2. The disciples of the Saviour, walking in the footsteps of their divine Master, have always had a tender and loving devotion to His passion. But of all the saints there is not one who has felt the sufferings of the Son of God as keenly as His Blessed Mother. "A sword of sorrow pierced her heart," not only when she stood at the foot of the cross, but also during her whole life. Thus the Church applies to her the words:

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (Lam. i, 12)

The mother of sorrows stood weeping near the cross. (*Stabat mater.*)

The Apostles had a most earnest desire to inflame the hearts of their hearers with the love of Jesus crucified. They were never ashamed of that cross; they preached it at all times and in all places: "We preach Christ crucified." (1 Cor. i, 23)

St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, exhorts them to keep the memory of the passion always before them:

"Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself: that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." (Heb. xii, 3)

He wishes us to keep it before our minds even until the last coming of Jesus Christ.

"You shall show the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor. xi, 26)

"I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me." (Gal. ii, 20)

Since the chief occupation of Christ during His mortal life was thinking of that cruel death which He should suffer for our sins; since the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, the whole Church, have made the passion of our Saviour the principal object of their piety, their devotion, their gratitude to God, let us frequently think of it, and fervently embrace so holy a practice; because devotion to the passion is not only most pleasing to God, it is also most helpful to us in the work of our salvation.

II. MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST IS MOST BENEFICIAL TO A CHRISTIAN

There is nothing more profitable to us than meditation on the passion of Christ. It is the great remedy for all our wounds, a remedy that will most certainly heal them. It is the most efficacious means (1) of turning us away from sin, (2) of leading us to the practice of virtue.

1. *It turns us away from sin.*

The Israelites murmured against God in the desert; and to punish them God sent them fiery serpents, whose bite burned like fire. (Num. xxi, 6). Moses interceded for them. God commanded him to make a brazen serpent, "which when they that were bitten looked upon, they were healed." (*Ibid.* xxi, 9). Christ Himself has explained this figure: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John iii, 14, 15)

"What was that serpent that was raised up? The death of our Lord on the Cross. As those who looked upon that serpent did not perish from the bite of the fiery serpents, so those who look with faith upon the death of Christ, will be freed from the wound of sin." (S. Aug.)

There is no vice for which we do not find a remedy in meditating on the passion of Christ. His body torn by scourges is a remedy against impurity; His great poverty, against avarice; His meekness, against anger; His spirit of forgiveness, against revenge. In a word: "This medicine given to man is so great that nothing greater can be thought of." (S. Aug.)

Sinners, even if your hearts were as hard as marble, meditation on the passion of Christ would soften them. You cannot be more hardened than were the Jews; yet see what our Lord says of them: "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers; and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born." (Zach. xii, 10)

This prophecy was accomplished with regard to the Jews, who were converted on the day of Pentecost; why should it not have the same effect on you?

2. *It leads us to the practice of virtue.*

This holy practice will produce in our souls not only a hatred of vice, but also a love of virtue. Our Lord has said: "And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John xii, 32)

"O Lord, Thou hast drawn all things to Thyself." (S. Leo.)

Yes, it is by His cross that Christ has drawn to Himself both Jew and gentile, Greek and barbarian. It is from His cross that He exhorts us to become saints, that He teaches us to despise the things of this world as worthless when compared with those of eternity.

"Because if these things were worthy of love, the God-Man would love them." (S. Aug.)

It is from His cross also that He teaches us not to fear insults or persecution, "because if these things were injurious to men, the Man-God would not have suffered them." (S. Aug.) "This cross encourages us to suffer them." (*Id.*)

Where is the man, however poor, sick, or afflicted, who would dare to complain if he compared his own sufferings with those Christ endured for our sake? He would see that though he may have suffered much, he must suffer infinitely more, before his sufferings could equal those of Jesus Christ.

"Our greatest sufferings become trivial in the presence of the passion of our Lord" (S. Greg. Naz.)

But, alas! there are few who think of the passion and death of our dear Redeemer. "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart." (Jer. xii, 11)

Ah! Lord, who could tell what occupies the thoughts and affections of men on this earth? Are we not forced to say that men occupy themselves with everything but You? And must it not be said further, that the greater number of them think only of what displeases You, offends You, and crucifies You anew? Let us at least not carry our ingratitude so far. Let us keep always before our minds the thought of a God crucified for love of us.

"Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought." (1 Pet. iv, 1)

Division

In order to understand clearly the meaning of these words, which human nature finds so hard and bitter: "Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake," consider these four circumstances in the death of Jesus Christ:

1. Who is He that suffers? He is the supreme Lord of all, who gives life and takes it away. He is the Word of God.

2. After having carefully considered who it is that suffers, ask your-

self for whom He suffers. "He has loved me, and delivered Himself for me."

3. What He has suffered.

4. How gladly He suffered, urged on by His great love for us. "He was offered because He Himself wished it, because He loved me."

XI

THE WORK OF SALVATION

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

Jesus Christ came on earth to show us the necessity of working to save our souls and how to do so. In all He said, in all He did, He had that one object in view. Let us listen to this Divine Master and profit by His teaching. Let us consider: I. How we should regard the affair of salvation; II. How we should work at it.

I. HOW WE SHOULD REGARD THE AFFAIR OF SALVATION

One day, when our Blessed Lord entered Bethania, a woman named Martha received Him into her house. Mary, the sister of Martha, sat at the feet of the Saviour listening to His divine word. Martha, seeing herself charged with the whole work, lovingly complained to our Lord. Jesus answered her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary; Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke x, 41, 42)

That one necessary thing to which Jesus Christ wishes us to pay the most earnest attention is the question of our salvation.

"Reflect seriously on that one thing, because it is the one thing that is necessary, and it is infinitely more important than all others." (S. Aug.)

Consider the salvation of your soul as your one important business.

1. *Our salvation is a matter for ourselves alone,* a matter that concerns each one personally, of which each one shall have to give an account, and which may not be confided to the care of others.

"We entreat you, brethren, that you abound more; and that you use your endeavor to be quiet, and that you do your own business." (1 Thess. iv, 10, 11)

"Every one shall bear his own burden. . . . Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 5, 7, 8)

"He who created you without your help will not save you without your help." (S. Aug.)

"Take heed to yourself, O man! Take heed to yourself, that is, to your soul, which you know is your nobler part, which you know is your whole self, which you know is your better part." (S. Ambr.)

Reflect, then, seriously on yourself. I say on yourself, not on your money; I say on yourself, not on your land and property. Reflect on yourself, not on that body which is only dust and ashes, but on your soul, which ought to be so precious to you. How foolish are those who think so little of their salvation that they trust to their heirs to do that which, if done by themselves, would contribute much more powerfully to their sanctification. Those pious legacies, those alms, those restitutions. . . . Why do you not attend to them yourselves? Is there not reason to fear that your heirs may neglect them?

"Who will justify him that sinneth against his own soul?" (Eccli. x, 32)

"What exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

"If thou be wise, thou shalt be so to thyself." (Prov. ix, 12)

2. *Salvation is a most important business.* Of what is there question in this affair of salvation? Of gaining infinite, incomparable treasures:

"Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. xi, 9)

"These goods surpass all that can be wished for or desired: they can be acquired, they cannot be valued." (S. Aug.)

There is question of avoiding eternal evils.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. viii, 12)

"I am tormented in this flame." (Luke xvi, 24)

"Fire shall devour them." (Ps. xx, 10)

Voluptuaries, will you say that you have lost your soul, but that at least you have satisfied your passions? Avaricious, ambitious men, will you say that you have lost your soul, but that at least you have gained so much goods? Fools, do you not know that the whole world is not worth one soul?

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

If we consider the conduct of the great majority of men, should we not be inclined to say that their salvation is to them a trifle rather than an important matter? What do men do from morning till night for the salvation of their souls?

How do they pray? How do they spend the Sundays? If they have a farm, they visit it often; if they are engaged in a law-suit, they

think of it day and night. It is only the poor soul of which they take no care.

"They are a nation without counsel and without wisdom. Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end." (Deut. xxxii, 28, 29)

They look with indifference on that which caused Jesus Christ to become man, to suffer and to die.

"Who for us men, and for our salvation," etc. (Creed.)

"I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." (John x, 10)

"God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii, 4)

"God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation." (1 Thess. v, 9)

"Let the wealth of the world be destroyed rather than that it should cause the loss of a soul." (S. Eucher.)

"If you have a heart, understand that the necessity of saving your soul is greater than any other." (S. Ambr.)

3. *The saving of our soul is our one work.* We have only one soul; so we have only one essential thing to do, that is, to save it.

If you had two souls, you could perhaps risk losing one to satisfy your passions. But as you have only one, you should use every effort to save it. This is what David did:

"My soul is continually in my hands." (Ps. cxviii, 109)

"As we do not easily forget that which we hold in our hands, so we should never forget the question of our souls; and that care of our souls should always fill our hearts." (S. Bern.)

"Have pity on thy soul, pleasing God." (Eccli. xxx, 24)

"He estimates things at their true value who considers that he himself (that is, his soul) is to be preferred to anything he has. How many there are who prefer a little vile wealth to their eternal salvation!" (S. Bern.)

"Guard well your soul; Christ died for it. If you lose it, you cannot have another Christ who will die for it, or another death of the same Christ." (Hugh of S. Victor.)

"The loss of the soul carries with it the loss of all other things; for the man who, in losing his soul, loses his whole being, cannot possess anything afterwards." (Salvian)

II. HOW WE SHOULD WORK TO SAVE OUR SOULS

1. As the salvation of the soul is a personal matter for each one, we must work at it as soon as possible, without delay; 2. it being our im-

portant business, we must work at it with care and diligence; 3. it being our sole business, we must work at it continually and without interruption.

1. *We can not commence this great work of our salvation too soon.* Fathers and mothers, say to your children frequently: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not." (Eccles. xii, 1)

St. Paul says to all: "This therefore, I say, brethren: The time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives be as if they had none; . . . and they that use this world as if they used it not." (1 Cor. vii, 29, 31)

(Therefore) "walk whilst you have the light that the darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." (John xii, 35)

"The night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4)

"Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly; for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening." (Eccles. ix, 10)

"O miserable man, why do you presume on the future?" (S. Bern.)

"It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power." (Acts i, 7)

"At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come." (Luke xii, 40)

"Now our salvation is nearer than when we believed." (Rom. xiii, 11)

"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi, 2)

2. *We must work at it with care and diligence.* "Keep your souls carefully." (Deut. iv, 15). Why? Because the world is full of rocks and dangerous occasions; at each step we take, we are in danger of being lost for all eternity.

"We live in the midst of dangers to our eternal happiness." (Tert.)

"The mighty have sought after my soul." (Ps. liii, 5)

"Be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith." (1 Pet. v, 8, 9)

"Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!" (Matth. vii, 13, 14)

"There is a way which seemeth just to a man; but the ends thereof lead to death." (Prov. xiv, 12)

"Their way shall be as a slippery way in the dark; for they shall be driven on, and fall therein." (Jer. xxiii, 12)

"They fall into temptation . . . and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi, 9)

"Wherefore, my beloved, with fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Phil. ii, 12)

"The nobler the cause in which we are engaged, the greater should be the attention we pay to it." (S. Ambr.)

"It is the height of folly to bestow less care in securing the salvation of our souls than the devil bestows in securing their eternal ruin." (S. Chrys.)

"The soul may be wounded and brought to ruin at any moment, and may perish in many ways, and yet we bestow very little care upon it." (S. Chrys.)

"Oh! mad folly of a sick man! Your soul languishes in sin unto eternal death, and you do not seek a remedy." (S. Bonav.)

Let us at least be as zealous for the salvation of our soul as we are for the health of our body. What care do you not bestow on a body which must very soon become the prey of corruption? And you do little or nothing for a soul that must live for ever.

3. *We must work at our salvation continually and without interruption,* lest, if we relax our efforts, another may gain the crown which was prepared for us.

"Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Apoc. iii, 11)

"He that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned unless he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii, 5)

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. x, 22)

"Woe to them that lose patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside unto crooked ways." (Eccli. ii, 16)

"In doing good let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing." (Gal. vi, 9)

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Apoc. ii, 10)

"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, because thou shalt have hope in the latter end." (Prov. xxiii, 17, 18)

"Salvation shall be to them that fear Thy name." (Mich. vi, 9)

How eagerly men strive to gain perishable goods! What privations they impose on themselves with this object!

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one." (1 Cor. ix, 25)

"I am the most foolish of men. . . . I have not learned wisdom, and have not known the science of saints." (Prov. xxx, 2, 3)

"Through a most perverse foresight men bestow the greatest care upon a time that will end very soon, and very little care upon the eternity that will never end. Our greatest care, our most earnest solicitude should be bestowed upon the question of our eternal salvation, which is for us the greatest of all questions." (S. Eucher.)

"In the affair of salvation men sin by this, that they prefer uncertain things to those that are certain." (S. Aug.)

"The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind." (Wis. iv, 12)

"They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." (Ps. lxxv, 6)

From this earth you can either mount up to Heaven, or descend into hell. Consider what you should do. You are at the beginning of two roads, one of which, covered with flowers, leads you to eternal torments, the other, full of thorns, conducts you to everlasting joys and glory. Which do you choose?

"To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv, 8)

"Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" (Luke x, 25)

"Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is all man." (Eccle. xii, 13)

"Therefore, without this the whole man is nothing." (S. Bern.)

"Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i, 10)

"Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end." (Deut. xxxii, 29)

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12)

"No security can be too great where eternity is in danger." (S. Greg.)

Divisions

Means of salvation. There are two classes of people who neglect their salvation: the timid, who imagine that the work of salvation is

more difficult than it really is, and lose courage at the thought of the difficulties to be overcome; and the presumptuous, who, on the contrary, look on this work as a very simple and easy matter, and do not make the efforts necessary to insure success. They both deceive themselves. We say, (1) to the timid, that salvation is not as difficult as they imagine, and that they must labor with confidence at this great work; (2) to the presumptuous, that the difficulties are greater than they suppose, and that they must work with fear and trembling.

I. One of the most *dangerous illusions* of which the demon avails himself to turn men aside from the way of salvation, is to represent to them that way as impracticable. It is too painful to save our souls, they say. It must be pointed out to them, on the contrary, that in carrying out this work they will find great help, both on the part of God, who gives all the graces necessary for salvation, and on their own part, since they have only to co-operate with these graces.

1°. *God wishes all men to be saved.* Is He not our Father? Why did He send His only begotten Son on earth? Why did this adorable Saviour offer Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross? Why did He institute the sacraments, by which we can receive all the graces we require? Why did He send His Apostles to preach the Gospel? God then, on His part, has done all that was necessary to save man.

2°. *What must we on our part do to save our souls?* All that is required is to have an efficacious desire. To desire efficaciously to save our souls is, in a word, to avoid everything that could turn us aside from the love of God, and to use every means that will help us to advance in that love. Sin is the only obstacle to salvation, and the observance of the commandments, the only road to eternal happiness. But does not all that depend on our own will, aided by divine grace?

II. Every man ought to fear lest he should not succeed in an affair which 1° is in itself difficult, 2° in which there are many dangers, and 3° the success of which is uncertain.

1°. *Salvation is difficult.* How many obstacles are there to surmount, how many passions to conquer! We must do violence to ourselves: "the violent bear it away."

2°. *In working out our salvation we are exposed to many dangers*: dangers from the world, dangers from the demon, dangers from ourselves. What unceasing vigilance is necessary to avoid being surprised! What precautions we must take if we would avoid being caught in the snares by which we are surrounded.

3°. *Our salvation is uncertain,* whether we consider our past or look forward to the future. We know that we committed sins in the past,

but have we done penance sufficient to blot out these sins? No one knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred. With regard to the future, we know that if we would save our souls, we must persevere in the service of God to the end, and die in a state of grace. But who can assure himself of this perseverance, which necessarily includes two things, a will constant in good, and a special grace which crowns our virtues at death? Who is the man that can depend on his will? We must then work out our salvation in fear and trembling. (Billot)

We should make everything help us in the work of securing our eternal salvation:

1. Our plans and projects; we should often put to ourselves that question of a great saint: "What bearing has this on eternity?"
2. The choice of a state of life.
3. The right use of our goods, our actions, our words, our thoughts, etc.

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1. It is an illusion to think that we can save our souls without toil and suffering: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." The example of Jesus Christ and the saints, the enemies we have to encounter, the figures employed by our Lord to impress this truth on us, do not allow us to have the least doubt regarding it. We must, therefore, watch over ourselves with unceasing vigilance in this great work.

2. But the sacrifices which we must make are not greater, and are often even less than those made by the followers of this world in order to attain their object. Think of the sacrifices made by the ambitious, the avaricious, the voluptuous.

3. Moreover, the sufferings we have to endure in working out our salvation are made sweet and easy by divine grace, by the help which God gives us, and by the hope of an eternal reward.

XII

DELAY OF CONVERSION

"There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doeth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke xv, 7)

The merciful God awaits you, invites you to return. He will rejoice at your return. But do not think that He will always wait for you. If He says to you: Return and you will receive life; He also warns you not to delay, because in postponing your conversion you expose yourself to the danger of dying in sin. In reality, I. Conversion deferred becomes uncertain; II. Conversion deferred becomes difficult.

I. CONVERSION DEFERRED BECOMES UNCERTAIN

Which should we wonder at more—the goodness of God in searching for and receiving back the sinner, or the carelessness of the sinner in returning to God?

Sinners, in deferring your conversion you expose yourselves to the danger of never being converted; because you count on a time to come which may not be given to you. There is nothing more uncertain than this future time, (1) whether considered in itself and in its nature, or (2) in its relation to God who has not promised it.

1. The devil often keeps sinners under a sad delusion, by causing them to cherish the flattering hope of a future time when they will apply themselves seriously to the work of their conversion. This is the error into which young people are apt to fall. They depend on their youth and health. Those who are older allege as an excuse that they are so much occupied with their business as to have no time, but later on. Even those of advanced years who are standing on the brink of the grave, are deceived by this vain hope. And yet to what danger do not all these expose themselves? What is the time of life?

"A leaf that is carried away with the wind" (Job. xiii, 25); that "cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed and fleeth as a shadow." (*Ibid.* xiv, 2)

"Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." (*Ibid.* xiv, 1). "The days of man are short, and the number of his months is with Thee." (*Ibid.* 5)

"For what is your life? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away. For that you should say: If the Lord will; and, If we live, we will do this or that. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow." (Jas. iv, 14, 15)

"We had in ourselves the answer of death." (2 Cor. i, 9)

You may be surprised by death, and die without the sacraments. Do we not see very many to whom death does not give time for even an examination of conscience? Alas! How many there are who die in the flower of youth! Is it necessary to prove a truth which is so clearly shown by experience? Who can assure you that you will not be surprised by death, as so many others have been?

"They shall suddenly die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and they shall pass." (Job xxxiv, 20)

"Perhaps," you will say, "I shall not die so soon." But perhaps you *will* die soon: you are not more certain of the one than of the other.

"It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power." (Acts i, 7)

Is it not better, then, in this uncertainty, to choose the safer part, that is, to abandon sin and return to God without delay?

"Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time." (Eccle. ix, 12)

"He [man] knoweth not what time shall pass, and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die." (Eccle. xi, 20)

"Perhaps He will give time, you say. Why do you say, *perhaps?* It happens sometimes, no doubt, but remember that there is question of your soul." (S. Chrys.)

2. God has not promised to give time to the presumptuous sinner. He has certainly promised to pardon the sinner who is sincerely converted; but has He promised another day to him who defers his conversion?

"God has promised to pardon you if you do penance; but He has not promised you another day if you defer your conversion." (S. Aug.)

On the contrary: "At what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." (Luke xii, 40). "But of that day and hour no one knoweth. . . . And as in the days of Noë, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matth. xxiv, 36, 37)

How many lost souls are now in hell who, like you, counted on a future when they would change their lives, but who were surprised by death in the midst of their sins! You can now do what they shall never be able to do. What a happiness this should be for you! But what

a dreadful evil for you if you do not learn wisdom from their example! Will you be able to excuse yourself on the plea that you have not had time? You have time now. Take advantage of it.

"Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." (Is. lv, 6)

"God hath given him place for penance, and he abuseth it unto pride." (Job xxiv, 23)

"He swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever . . . that time shall be no longer." (Apoc. x, 6)

"The longer God waits for your repentance, the severer will be your judgment if you neglect to repent." (S. Aug.)

"He who neglects to make use of the time given to him for repentance, will pray in vain for mercy when he stands before the judgment seat of God." (S. Greg.)

"He [Esau] found no place of repentance, although with tears he had sought it." (Heb. xii, 17)

Turn sincerely to God to-day and do not wait until tomorrow. Do not continue any longer to say: "Tomorrow, tomorrow." There is no tomorrow for a Christian." (Tert.) Say rather: "I have said, now I have begun." The longer you put off your conversion, the more difficult it will become.

II. CONVERSION DEFERRED BECOMES DIFFICULT

Two things are *necessary for the conversion* of a sinner: the grace of God and the will of man. Man cannot do anything without the assistance of grace, and grace does nothing without the co-operation of man; it is, therefore, necessary that grace and the will should act together. But (1) the sinner who puts off his conversion exposes himself to the danger of being deprived of grace; and (2) even if grace be given to him he has every reason to fear that his will may not co-operate with it: two reasons which prove that the delay of conversion renders it very difficult.

1. *God, who wishes all men to be saved, gives to all the graces necessary to secure their salvation.* The sinner should never despair of saving his soul. But we must not believe that God gives as much grace to those who resist it, as to those who are faithful to it. Just as He rewards fidelity to grace by bestowing more abundant graces, so He punishes the contempt of grace by withdrawing those heavenly gifts; not indeed that he refuses them altogether, but He does not bestow the graces of choice and predilection.

"Woe to thee that despisest, shalt not thyself also be despised?" (Is. xxxiii, 7)

"I go and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sins." (John viii, 21)

There, then, are favorable moments, special graces, to which our predestination is, as it were, attached, and which we shall never find again, if once we allow them to pass by. And certainly it is but just that God should act in this way towards sinners who despise His graces.

"Thou art just, O Lord; and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. cxviii, 137)

"Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? . . . Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath."(Rom. ii, 4, 5)

You do not wish to return to God now when He gives you the grace to do so; you close your eyes to the light that enlightens you; but a time will come when that clear light will no longer enlighten you, when that grace will no longer touch you, when even the menaces of God will no longer terrify you. The Lord will then abandon you as you now abandon Him.

"I called, and you refused; you have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My apprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared." (Prov. i, 24–26)

"Then they shall call upon Me and I will not hear." (*Ibid.* 28)

But, you will say, were there not great sinners who became great saints? Yes, but these sinners made good use of the first decisive grace that God gave them, to return sincerely to Him: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6); or, if they rejected it, God afterwards poured into their hearts those extraordinary graces which He bestows according to His own divine pleasure, graces which you cannot hope for without unpardonable rashness and presumption. Do you really believe that God will draw you out of your bondage against your will, that He will snatch you by force from the mire of sin in which you are sunk? He does not wish to force your free will; on His part He offers you all the help you require to raise yourselves up again from your fallen state. Perhaps at this very moment while I am speaking to you, He urges you, touches your heart by some special grace, which He gives you, notwithstanding your abuse of so many other graces. It is your business, your interest, to co-operate in His designs, to co-operate with this special grace. Who will dare to say that this will not be the last of His favors?

"Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." (Eccli. xiv, 14)

"All the evils of procrastination and delay are caused by presumption." (Tert.)

"The delay of conversion is a deadly snare." (S. Basil)

"His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust." (Job xx, 11)

"The sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." (Is. lxv, 20)

2. But even supposing that God gives you those graces of conversion on which you rely, for the mercy of God is greater than the malice of the sinner, I maintain that *your conversion will still be very difficult* on your own part, because your will, by habitually resisting the grace of God, will become insensible to its movements, and will no longer be touched by anything. Such, perhaps, is the state of insensibility in which you now find yourselves: instructions, the thought of hell, the sudden death of a lover of this world, all that does not rouse you.

"The wicked man, when he cometh into the depth of sins, contemneth." (Prov. xviii, 3)

Perhaps you count on returning to God at the hour of death! I grant you that this is possible; while life lasts, no one should despair of his salvation.

"The road to the mercy of God is always open." (S. Cypr.)

"Conversion will never be too late, (provided it be real), the penitent thief passed from the cross to paradise." (S. Jerome.)

But again I maintain that you will not be converted at the last moment, on account of the great difficulty you will have in effecting your conversion; because, hardened by the fatal habit of resisting grace, you will not then respond to its last invitation. Sin will quit you, but you will not quit sin. I speak from daily experience. We have seen numbers of sinners brought by sickness to the very door of death; but when they were restored to health, could it be said that many of them were really converted? And yet what signs of sorrow did they not give? They received the Sacraments. . . . If they had died after all these signs of repentance, would it not be said that Heaven was opened to them? Nevertheless, in order to judge of the sincerity of their sorrow, see them after they have recovered from the danger of death. Are they not just as they were before, just as debauched, as deceitful, as immodest, as vindictive? Do they bring forth those worthy fruits of penance which they promised? Do they restore the ill-gotten goods? Are they more assiduous in prayer, more earnest in religious exercises? Some sinners who, perhaps, may be listening to me, gave such signs of sorrow when they believed they were about to die; but have they become better?

"If he who repents at the last moment and is reconciled dies a good death, still I am not safe." (S. Aug.)

"We should fear a death-bed repentance." (*Ibid.*)

"You shall die in your sins." (John viii, 24)

"Whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. xi, 15)

"If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil." (Jer. xiii, 23)

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 7, 8)

"A hard heart shall fare evil at the last." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22). For years your conscience has been warning you that you are not in a state to appear before God. Do not, then, delay longer in procuring for yourself that peace of soul which a sincere conversion brings with it.

"Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. . . . Say not: I have sinned and what evil hath befallen me?" (Eccli. v, 8, 4)

"Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor. . . . He that stole, let him now steal no more." (Ephes. iv, 25, 28)

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (*Ibid.* v, 16)

"The longer the wicked try the patience of God, the more severely will God punish them." (S. Greg.)

"Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able." (Luke xiii, 24)

"Live a good life that you may die a holy death." (S. Aug.)

"Understand these things, you that forget God; lest He snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you." (Ps. xlix, 22)

"Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. xviii, 3)

"If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, . . . and serve Him only." (1 Kings, vii, 5)

"Turn to the Lord and forsake thy sins." (Eccli. xvii, 21)

"Walk whilst you have light, that the darkness overtake you not." (John xii, 35)

"Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men." (Gal. vi, 10)

"We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain. . . . Behold now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi, 1, 2)

Divisions

The sinner defers his conversion,

1. Either because he believes that grace will not be given to him; a common excuse, but

(a) Unjust if we consider the sinner who pleads it;

(b) Rash and ungrateful, if we consider God on whom the blame is laid;

(c) Foolish and indefensible, if we examine it in itself.

2. Or because he imagines that one day, undeceived regarding the world and his passions, he will be in a better state to begin to lead a Christian life, and remain steadfast in it. But

(a) Who has told you that you will live until the time comes which you have marked out for yourself?

(b) Why do you promise yourself that age will change your heart?

(c) Finally, some say that conversion is a striking act that brings them under public notice, and that they fear they would not be able to persevere. (Massillon.)

Impenitence during life leads to impenitence at death,

1. Because of hardness of heart;

2. In punishment of want of correspondence to grace;

3. Because the false security which deceived the sinner up to that time will deceive him also at the last moment. (Bourdaloue)

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1. Repentance is necessary; it should be prompt and sincere.

2. Dangers of delaying repentance. To effect your conversion you require grace, time and a good will; but

(1) You have no claim to grace;

(2) Time has not been promised to you;

(3) Your own will may betray you. (Chevassu)

Conversion put off to the hour of death

1. Is very often insufficient. How can a sinner at that moment make a good confession, restore all that should be restored, make reparation for calumnies, etc.?

2. Is hardly ever sincere, because then it is not the will that turns away from sin, it is sin that abandons the will.

3. Is very rarely supernatural, being more often caused by a merely human fear.

XIII

THE HABIT OF SIN

"Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v, 1)

If you who are in sin would save your souls, you must change your lives. But a will accustomed to evil does not easily turn to good; one abandons with difficulty a bad habit of long standing. It can, however, be done with the assistance of grace. To help you to do it, I will show you: I. What a bad habit is; II. How to overcome it.

I. WHAT A BAD HABIT IS

"A habit is a quality which we acquire by repeated acts." (S. Thos.)

There are good and bad habits.

"A good habit helps the just man to gain everlasting life; a bad habit conducts the sinner to eternal death." (S. Bern.)

"A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii, 6)

That you may clearly understand the full force of a bad habit, listen to the words in which S. Paul gives expression to the lamentation of a soul weeping under the weight of its vicious inclinations:—

"I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind. . . . For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do." (Rom. vii, 22, 23, 19)

What is this other law which fights against the law of the mind?

"The law of sin is the force of habit." (S. Aug.)

This law (1) makes us resist all good inspirations of conversion: "I see another law fighting against the law of my mind." (2) It holds us captive under the law of sin: "captivating me in the law of sin." (3) It causes us to yield under the weight of our passions in such a way that we can no longer, so to say, rise up again. "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

1. *A sinful habit is opposed to all thoughts of conversion.* There is no sinner, no matter how attached he may be to his bad habits, who does not from time to time lift up his eyes to heaven, and desire to

break his bonds. But, alas! that bad habit at once begins to exercise its power over him. It says to him:—

"Do you imagine you can live without these things?" (S. Aug.)

Grace urges him to give up sin; habit holds him back.

"The nearer I desired to approach, the farther away I moved. I writhed in my bond." (S. Aug.)

The sinner reproaches himself for committing sin; he sees good examples; he hears sermons that condemn a life of sin; he even forms the resolution to return to God; but the bad habit comes and sweeps away all these good desires.

"What is there that habit does not overthrow?" (S. Bern.)

"Waters wear away the stones and with inundation the ground by little and little is washed away." (Job xiv, 19)

"The thoughts that filled my mind were like the efforts of those who are striving to rise, and are dragged down again by the weight of their slumber." (S. Aug.)

"The mound placed over a grave resembles the force of a bad habit, by which a soul is so crushed down that it can neither rise up nor even breathe." (S. Aug.)

"Habit is like a second and artificial nature." (*Id.*)

"The heart has grown hard and has lost all feeling of sorrow." (*Id.*)

"Is it not a perplexing position, to wish to break off a bad habit and to be unable to do so? To strive after Heaven in desire, and in deeds to remain in sin? To long in one's heart for the narrow way that leads to God, and by acts to remove farther from that way, and to suffer contradiction from one's self?" (S. Greg.)

"At first it will seem to you something impossible; in course of time you will not think it so grave, and after a while you will scarcely feel it." (S. Bern.)

"A sinful act, frequently repeated, becomes a habit; a habit begets, as it were, a necessity of sinning; necessity produces an impossibility of avoiding sin; such impossibility brings on despair, and despair causes eternal damnation." (*Id.*)

2. *A bad habit not only impedes all our efforts to give up sin, it also hardens us in evil;* it holds us in crime like slaves that are bound in chains.

"What is there that is not hardened by constant repetition?" (S. Bern.)

Listen to St. Augustine:

"I was weeping, bound, not in the bonds of another, but in those of my own will. My enemy was master of my will, out of which he had

made a chain and had bound me. Lust was produced from a perverse will, and I gave way to lust until a habit was created; and when habit was not resisted, it became a necessity." (*Confessions*)

Sinners, I appeal to your own experience. Is it not true that nothing weakens the will so much, nothing holds it captive so securely, nothing engages it in evil by so many ties, as an inveterate habit?

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22)

"When a man makes a rope, he keeps twisting it round constantly, increasing its strength by winding thread over thread. Such is the strength of a bad habit; it becomes greater, the more the habit is indulged in." (S. Bede.)

Think of the change which habit has produced in you. In the beginning of that habit of theft or impurity, a word of warning, an exhortation, was enough to keep you from it. But when you grew old in evil, it was no longer the same thing. Alas! to what have you brought yourselves?

"The cords of the wicked have encompassed me." (Ps. cxviii, 61)

"Who drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job xv, 16)

"Who leave the right way, and walk by dark ways; who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things." (Prov. ii, 13, 14)

"They are confounded (in the beginning) because they have committed abomination; yea, rather, they are not confounded with confusion, and they have not known how to blush." (Jer. viii, 12)

"They were sold to do evil." (1 Mach. i, 16)

"Amen, amen, I say unto you: that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John viii, 34)

"For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave." (2 Pet. ii, 19)

"The changing of a habit once contracted is as much to be dreaded as death itself." (S. Aug.)

"The soul is fastened down by bodily pleasures as if by nails; it is held captive in the snares of its own acts, and is firmly bound by the allurements of worldly joys, awaiting its punishment." (S. Ambr.)

"When concupiscence springs up in the heart, reason is lulled to sleep, custom blinds the eyes, the wretched man is dragged down into the depths of iniquity, and is handed over, a captive, to the tyranny of evil ways." (S. Bern.)

"There are some whose souls are so wrapped in and covered by the habit of evil, as by a kind of skin, that in order to discontinue that habit they must strip themselves of it rather than put it aside." (*Id.*)

3. *Finally, a habit of sin leads to despair and ultimate impenitence.* This is its greatest and worst effect. In reality,

"The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth." (Prov. xviii, 3)

Speak to him of his soul, of the judgment of God, of the sufferings of the damned, of whatever you wish to speak, he despises all. He is a Lazarus in his tomb; and he will there become a prey to spiritual corruption unless the all-powerful voice of God recalls him to life.

"[But] wilt Thou [O Lord] show wonders to the dead? or shall physicians raise to life and give praise to Thee? Shall any one in the sepulchre declare Thy mercy, and Thy truth in destruction?" (Ps. lxxxvii, 11, 12)

"Add Thou iniquity upon their iniquity; and let them not come into Thy justice." (Ps. lxviii, 28)

"His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust." (Job xx, 11)

"Woe to you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as the rope of a cart." (Is. v, 18)

"We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." (Jer. li, 9)

Such a sinner closes his ears to the most salutary advice; he hardens his heart against the most prudent warnings; nothing touches him, neither the thought of the pains of hell nor of the happiness of Heaven, nor even the fear of a sudden and unhappy death.

"Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness." (Eph. iv, 19)

"There are those who unblushingly indulge in sin even when their hair is gray, and lead an evil life even in their old age." (S. Ambr.)

"The habit of sinning can be called the worst degree of guilt, for then the sinner loses the fear of God, for whom he feels nothing but contempt." (S. Bern.)

"Who is more dead than he who cherishes in his breast the burning sin of concupiscence, and neither feels its effects, nor dreads it, nor shakes it off." (*Id.*)

The sinner, however, can free himself from the habit of sin, provided he makes proper use of the remedies within his reach.

II. WHAT THE HABITUAL SINNER MUST DO TO FREE HIMSELF FROM HIS BAD HABIT

1. He must *sincerely desire* to do so. The sister of S. Thomas said to him one day: "My brother, you have the reputation of being a learned man; tell me what I must do to save my soul." "My sister,"

answered the holy Doctor, "in order to save your soul, you must desire to save it."

"We cannot go to Heaven in ships, or in chariots, or on foot; for not only to start on the journey but also to reach the journey's end, is nothing else than to wish to go thither; to wish it with a strong and firm will, not in a careless manner, as if at the same time wishing it and not wishing it." (S. Aug.)

"I would indeed like to give up sin." But why do you not say: "I will give it up?" "And I said: Now I have begun." [But] "the sluggard willeth and willeth it not." (Prov. xiii 4). What is the meaning of the words, "I would like"? It is an illusion, a conversion to God in imagination only; because the sinner does not really wish to give up sin. "I would like," means that you have only a half formed desire, a weak and languishing will, which is not enough. A sinner will suspend his bad habits for some days in order to receive Holy Communion at Easter; but he returns to his evil practices almost immediately afterwards. Does such a man really desire to give up sin and to work earnestly and efficaciously in saving his soul? Wish with a strong and firm will.

2. He must *place himself under a wise and prudent director,* whose advice he must carefully follow. When Christ raised up Lazarus from the tomb, he ordered two things to be done, which a confessor should carry out when dealing with habitual sinners, of whom Lazarus was a figure. The first: "Take away the stone"; the second: "Loose him." The stone that is the great obstacle to the conversion of the sinner is the dangerous occasion which causes him to fall again, the house, the company, etc. The confessor tells him he must take away the stone; but that is not enough. The sinner must break the chains that hold him bound in his bad habits. "Loose him." Whenever a sinner commits an impure act, let him punish himself by fasting. After each relapse let him perform a fresh act of penance. The bad habit must be conquered by the good habit to which it is opposed. The sinner has been told this a hundred times and yet he does nothing. He is like the Israelites: "The children of Israel have continually done evil in my eyes from their youth." (Jer. xxxii, 30). The sinner, so to speak, does violence to himself in order to contract these bad habits; he must do still greater violence to himself in order to destroy them. The bad habits which he has allowed to grow up have taken deep root; and it will cost him some trouble to eradicate them.

"You have labored to nourish them, labor now to overcome them." (S. Aug.)

"Loose the bonds from thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion." (Is. lii, 2)

"The more the will labors in overcoming a bad habit, the stronger it grows by repeated efforts." (S. Aug.)

"He who would conquer a bad habit must fight a hard battle." (S. Aug.)

3. In order that his efforts may be crowned with success, he must join to them *fervent* and *persevering prayer.*

"My son, hast thou sinned? do so no more; but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee." (Eccli. xxi, 1)

Unite your tears to those Christ shed for sinners. He alone can raise up to life a soul that is dead in habitual sin. The Holy Ghost places the conversion of a habitual sinner among the things that are most difficult to accomplish.

"If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or a leopard his spots, you also may do well, when you have learned evil." (Jer. xiii, 23)

As conversion is so difficult, you must ask it from God with the greatest fervor and perseverance.

"A long sickness is troublesome to the physician; the physician cutteth off a short sickness." (Eccli. x, 11, 12)

"As it was your mind to go astray from God; so when you return again, you shall seek Him ten times as much." (Baruch iv, 28)

"It is not a light task to turn aside from a bad habit, and recall oneself to the way of God's law." (S. Basil)

It is then time to cease doing evil and to learn to do good. Fathers and mothers, watch over your children and check their vicious inclinations. If you neglect to check the disposition that draws them to evil, you will very soon see spring up bad habits, which you will not be able to correct. And you, who unfortunately find yourselves already in this sad state, think seriously of its unhappy consequences, and use with courage and perseverance the means proposed to you by which you can free yourselves from it. If you suffer any pain in doing this, remember that you must save your souls at all costs, and that you must do violence to yourselves in order to gain Heaven.

"Cease to do perversely, learn to do well." (Is. i, 16, 17)

Say to God with an earnest desire to be heard:—

"Deliver me from my necessities." (Ps. xxiv, 17)

Lord, heal my wounds, they are old and deep.

"My sores are putrefied and corrupted, because of my foolishness." (Ps. xxxvii, 6)

"Draw me out of the mire, . . . and out of the deep waters." (Ps. lxviii, 15)

"That the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer." (Rom. vi, 6)

"Being then free from sin, we have been made servants of justice." (*Ibid.* 8)

Divisions

I

1. *Pernicious effects of a bad habit:*
1°. It renders the sinner more criminal.
2°. It renders his conversion more difficult.
3°. It renders his death in sin more probable.

2. *The most efficacious means of changing one's life:*
1°. A good will.
2°. Prayer and the sacraments.
3°. To oppose to evil inclinations the practice of the contrary virtues. (Billot)

II

1. Sinners who contract a habit of sin become insensible to their misery, because they ignore it and do not foresee its consequences.
2. That habit reduces them to a kind of powerlessness, in consequence of which they are unable to change their lives and return sincerely to God.
3. It renders them hard and obstinate, so that nothing can touch or soften them.

III

1. Habit gives a *facility of sinning;* this is what makes a habitual sinner an object of horror and abomination in the sight of God.
2. The more a sinner yields to a bad habit, the more difficult he finds the work of freeing himself from it; until at last, through a kind of moral necessity, he perseveres in sin and dies a miserable death.

IV

There are three *illusions* by which a habitual sinner usually deceives himself:
1. He imagines that the sin is less than it really is, and that habit diminishes its gravity.

2. He thinks that to obtain pardon, it is sufficient to make a simple acknowledgment of this deadly habit, without making any real effort to break it off or overcome it.

3. He persuades himself that he will have no difficulty in freeing himself from it whenever he wishes to do so. In this he is deceived.

V

1. The *habit of sin* is opposed to the mercy of God, who withdraws His graces and finally abandons the sinner.

2. It rejects the powerful and efficacious remedies, which are: fear of God's judgments, remorse of conscience, warnings, advice, etc.

3. It opposes all the efforts which the enfeebled will makes through custom, to come out of that state, and usually renders these efforts unavailing.

XIV

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH

"Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)
"It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. ix, 27)

During life we should constantly think of death. . . . Salutary thought! . . . "I have said: In the midst of my days I shall go down to the gates of hell." (Is. xxxviii, 10). Young or old, I will think that I must one day die, and I will have death always before my eyes.

To encourage you in a practice so holy, I will show you:—I. What the moment of death means; II. The advantage of thinking of it.

I. WHAT THE MOMENT OF DEATH MEANS

1. Dreadful moment, when everything in the world dies to man, when man dies to all on earth.

"When he shall die, he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him." (Ps. xlviii, 18)

"There is one that is enriched by living sparingly . . . and he knoweth not what time shall pass and that death approacheth, and he must leave all to others, and shall die." (Eccli. xi, 18, 20)

At death, the greatest shall be equal to the most miserable.

"The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master." (Job iii, 19)

It is a moment infinitely more terrible in its consequences than in itself: these consequences are irreparable, eternal.

"Man shall go into the house of his eternity." (Eccli. xii, 5)

"Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii, 19)

"My days shall be shortened, and only the grave remaineth for me." (Job xvii, 1)

A short but decisive moment, after which the sinner can no longer hope for mercy, nor the just for an increase of merit. A moment, the mere thought of which has made princes tremble on their thrones; the dread of which has peopled the desert with solitaries.

"Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." (Job xiv, 1)

"We all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth." (2 Kings xiv, 14)

"When a man shall die, he shall inherit serpents, and beasts, and worms." (Eccli. x, 13)

"I have said to rottenness: Thou art my father; to worms, my mother and sister." (Job xvii, 14)

"Who is the man that shall live and shall not see death?" (Ps. lxxxviii, 49)

"For all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out." (Wis. vii, 6)

"Whether you go quickly or slowly, human life is short." (S. Aug.)

"The moment man begins to live, he may begin also to die; the beginning of life makes the possibility of death." (S. Aug.)

"The dreadful separation of body and soul is entirely the work of death." (S. Bern.)

Finally, it is the awful moment when the Church believes it to be her duty to sustain her children by all the help she can procure for them: "Come to his assistance, all ye saints of God; meet him, all ye angels of God, receiving his soul. O Lord, receive Thy creature lovingly. . . . I recommend thee to the omnipotent God, and I commit thee to Him whose creature thou art." (Ritual)

2. Such is the moment of death. Do you think of it often and seriously?

"But you like men shall die." (Ps. lxxxi, 7)

Do you regulate your life, your acts, your plans, by the thought of death? It is not necessary to warn criminals confined in a prison and awaiting a judgment in which there will be for them a question of life or death, to think of the danger in which they are, and of the best means of escaping it. We resemble such criminals, for the whole earth is the great prison of man, and we can go out from it only by punishment. We live in expectation, not only of that sentence of death which is already pronounced, but of another sentence also, which has not yet been passed; a sentence that will make us happy or miserable for all eternity. Everything warns us to think of it; and yet there are very few who think of it seriously. People even banish the thought.

"There is no regard to their death." (Ps. lxxii, 4)

Does that man, governed by avarice, think of it?

"Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii, 20)

Does the drunkard think of it? Alas! if so, does he not say like those unhappy men of whom the prophet speaks:

"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." (Is. xxii, 13)

Does that impure man, who pollutes and profanes his body, think of it? Ah! if he stood beside a grave and there contemplated those

bodies exhaling corruption and rottenness, would he continue in his sin?

"He shall be brought to the graves, and shall watch in the heap of the dead." (Job xxi, 32)

"Come and see." (John xi, 34)

Does the ambitious man understand that at death there shall remain to him only a sad "Here lies"?

Does the libertine, who seems to defy the Lord, think of that moment when the Sovereign Master will laugh at him in His turn?

"I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. Then they shall call upon Me and I will not hear." (Prov. i, 26, 28)

Innumerable souls are lost because people will not think of death. They put the thought of death from their minds, they forget it and even force themselves to forget it. They see people die every day; and yet they live as if they themselves would never die. This is the cunning of an evil spirit; he no longer says: "You shall not die the death" (Gen. iii, 4), but he says: "You will not die so soon." But death comes on them suddenly, and then

"The sorrows of hell encompassed me; and the snares of death prevented me." (Ps. xvii. 6)

"To a man whose heart is hardened in sin, death seems very far off, even at the moment when he begins to feel its stroke. (S. Greg.)

"Be not foolish; lest thou die before thy time." (Eccle. vii, 18)

"Nothing has deceived mankind so much as that, although they know not whether their lives will be long or short, yet they promise themselves a long enjoyment of this world and its pleasures." (S. Ambr.)

"Our fear of death should be all the greater, because we can never foresee when death may come to us." (S. Greg.)

"Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time when it shall suddenly come upon them." (Eccle. ix 12)

II. ADVANTAGES OF THE THOUGHT OF DEATH

Man dies only because he has sinned.

"By sin death." (Rom. v, 12)

"The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi, 23)

To avoid sin altogether it is sufficient to think seriously that we must die.

"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)

The thought of death produces three good effects:—(1) It detaches

us from this world; (2) it curbs our passions; (3) it induces us to lead a holier life.

1. *It detaches us from this world.*

If the world can charm us for a little while, it is certain that this charm will vanish when confronted with the thought of death. The idea which we form to ourselves of that last hour, produces almost the same impression on our minds as that which real death will one day produce on our bodies. So he who occupies himself seriously with the thought of death, compares himself to a traveller passing through this world; . . . he feels no sorrow in leaving it.

"Oh! how great is the confidence of the dying man in whose heart there is no affection for this world." (Eusebius, *De Morte Hieron.*)

The thought of death makes us see the nothingness and vanity of earthly things; it makes us understand that everything is passing away, and that we also shall one day pass away.

"All things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on." (Wis. v, 9)

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; for in that we are put in mind of the end of all, and the living thinketh what is to come." (Eccle. vii, 3)

"He who remembers that he shall die will easily despise all things." (S. Jerome)

2. *It curbs our passions.*

Yes, for the movements of pride, avarice, revenge, impurity, the great remedy is the thought of death. Would to God that men had sufficient wisdom and prudence to think of that hour!

"Oh, that they would be wise and would understand and would provide for their last end." (Deut. xxxii, 29)

"We should not fear that which frees us from every cause of fear." (Tert.)

"Why do we so earnestly desire this life, since the longer we live, the greater grows the load of sin by which we are crushed down?" (S. Ambr.)

3. *It induces us to lead a holier life.*

The thought of death makes us correct the faults to which we are subject, and acquire the virtues which we do not yet possess; it makes us say to ourselves:

"O Lord, make me know my end; and what is the number of my days; that I may know what is wanting to me." (Ps. xxxviii, 5)

Filled with this thought, we will strive earnestly to lead a life regulated by God's holy law, which is the great means of obtaining the grace of a happy death. As the life is, so the death shall be. And if perchance we fall, animated by this great thought, we shall rise again very soon.

"Tarry not in the error of the ungodly, give glory before death." (Eccli. xvii, 26)

We shall make a good confession, give alms, make restitution, and we shall leave this life accompanied by our good works.

"Their works shall follow them." (Apoc. xiv, 13)

"Bring forth my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name." (Ps. cxli, 8)

"I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i, 23)

"I am even now ready to be sacrificed; and the time of my dissolution is at hand." (2 Tim. iv, 6)

Will you be able to say with S. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." (*Ibid.* 7)

"In all your works keep death before your mind." (S. Jerome)

"Watch, because you know not the day nor the hour." (Matth. xxv, 13)

It will be too late to think of death when we are dying; we must begin to think of it, now, and we must never let the thought of it leave our minds. When you rise up in the morning, ask yourself if you will live until the evening; and at night, when you lie down to rest, ask yourself if you will ever see the light of another morning. Let the clothes that cover your bed remind you of the shroud that will one day envelop your lifeless body.

"The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. v, 2)

"Be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come." (Matth. xxiv, 44)

"The time of our death is hidden from us in order that we may be always ready to die." (S. Aug.)

"Consider each morning that the day on which you are entering may be the day of your death; for the terrible summons will come to you when you least expect it, and woe to you if it finds you unprepared." (S. Anselm.)

"Those who always seriously think that they will die, do not die a sudden death." (*Id.*)

Finally, consider that every step you take brings you nearer to death. Your property, your wealth, may increase, but the number of your days is growing less. You are always advancing towards eternity.

Live then so that the words of the inspired writer may be verified in you: "Thou shalt enter the grave in abundance." (Job v, 26)

Divisions

I

I. There is nothing more *certain* than *death;* we should therefore prepare for it.

II. There is nothing more *uncertain* than the *hour of death;* therefore we should be prepared for it every moment of our life. (Billot)

II

1. We shall certainly die; our daily experience does not permit us to doubt this.
2. The time, the place, and the manner of our death are uncertain.
3. That which is uncertain in death is that we know not in what state we shall die; and that which is certain is that we shall remain in that state for all eternity. Let us, therefore, put ourselves in a state of grace, which will secure a happy death.

III

1. *Serious consideration on death* is a sovereign remedy for extinguishing the heat of our passions.
2. It is an infallible rule by which to guide our thoughts and our actions.
3. It is an efficacious means by which to fill our hearts with a holy fervor in all our acts. (Bourdaloue)

IV

Advantages which the remembrance of death procures for us:

1. It takes from us all affection for things of earth, and brings us to that state in which we should be at the hour of death.
2. It makes us think of Heaven, for which we were created.
3. It obliges us to do during life what we shall wish to have done when we shall be on our death bed.

V

1. What is the meaning of the words, *to die?*
   When and *how* shall I die?
3. Am I now *ready to die?*

XV

DEATH OF THE WICKED

"For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 8)

The time of life is a time given us by God to work, to sow; death is the harvest time. He who sows good seed will gather good fruit. But he who sows bad seed will gather only bad fruit. He must expect to reap only fruits of malediction. "The death of the sinner is very evil." (Ps. xxxiii, 22). What is it that makes the death of the sinner so bitter?

The *past*, the *present*, and the *future*, all combine to make the death of the wicked frightful.

I. The past, by the most bitter regret. II. The present, by the keenest anguish. III. The future, by the overwhelming despair.

I. THE PAST, BY THE MOST BITTER REGRET

The dying sinner sees in his past life only subjects of the most bitter regret, (1) whether he thinks of the pleasures he has tasted, (2) or considers the sins he has committed, (3) or calls to mind the means of salvation he has abused.

1. *The pleasures he has tasted*

The pleasures are past; all the objects that seduced him have disappeared. All appear to him now only vanity and deceit. That agreeable society, those pleasure parties, those plays, all have vanished: there remains to him only a sad remembrance of them.

"I did but taste a little honey, and behold I must die." (1 Kings xiv, 43)

"I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will make the latter end thereof as a bitter day." (Amos viii, 10)

"Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy." (Prov. xiv, 13)

2. *The sins he has committed*

But what causes the most bitter regret to the sinner is that in going after these pleasures, he made his soul criminal in the sight of God;

he loaded it with sins that will bring down on it a sentence of eternal death. All his criminal thoughts, his impure desires, his dissolute words, his bad acts, all these sins rise up before him in their number, their circumstances, their enormity.

"My iniquities have gone over my head; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." (Ps. xxxvii, 5)

"We are your works; . . . we will go with you to the judgment seat of God." (S. Bern.)

Like Antiochus, he can say: "Sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down for anxiety. And I said in my heart: Into how much tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am: I that was pleasant and beloved in my power. But now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem." (1 Mach. vi, 10–12)

"O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that hath peace in his possessions." (Eccli. xli, 7)

Thus, sinners, the more pleasure you will have felt in committing sin, the more pain sin will cause you at the hour of death, in the bitter reproaches which your conscience will then make to you.

"If a man live many years, and have rejoiced in them all, he must remember the darksome time, and the many days: which when they shall come, the things passed shall be accused of vanity." (Eccli. xi, 8)

"In that day all their thoughts shall perish." (Ps. cxlv, 4)

"When they shall say, peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them." (1 Thess. v, 3)

"As yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them." (Ps. lxxvii, 30, 31)

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (Ps. xxi, 13)

3. *The means of salvation he has abused.*

The thought of how he abused the many means of salvation offered to him during life, increases the misery of the dying sinner. He could have saved his soul, but he did not wish to do so. What numberless graces he received! How many holy inspirations! How many salutary instructions! What good examples! What powerful help in the sacraments! He recalls all this to his mind, and he sees that he has resisted all these graces. O fool that I am, he cries out, how great has been my blindness! I must now quit this world without having done anything for Heaven!

"We fools!" (Wis. v, 4)

"There is no peace for my bones because of my sins." (Ps. xxxvii, 4)

"Woe to the wicked unto evil; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." (Is. iii, 11)

"For your sins . . . you shall fall among the ruins of your idols." (Levit. xxvi, 28, 30)

"You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity, you have eaten the fruit of lying." (Os. x, 13)

II. THE PRESENT, BY THE KEENEST ANGUISH

Sorrow is in his soul, caused by the separation from all that he has cherished most. He must bid farewell to all. He must attend to affairs to which he has never yet paid attention, and which he is not in a state to put in order, he must dispose of those goods which he has got together with so much labor, and which he finds it so hard to quit.

"Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live." (Is. xxxviii, 1)

"Doth bitter death separate in this manner?" (1 Kings xv, 32)

"Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii, 20)

"Thou hast seen the rich man living; think of him dying. Think of what he has here; think of what he shall take with him." (S. Aug.)

He suffers without merit. His pains complete his reprobation, because he suffers them only with impatience. Death is drawing near; see his livid lips, his eyes wandering and often sightless, his face pale and distorted. But what of the sacraments of the dying! the last sacraments! He does not think of them, and no one has the courage to speak of them to him. He dies at last without having had time to consider his sad state, without having thought of his eternal salvation.

"Behold, I die, what will the first birth-right avail me?" (Gen. xxv, 32)

"The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly." (Job xx, 15)

III. THE FUTURE, BY OVERWHELMING DESPAIR

But admitting that the sinner may have time to think of his salvation, and that his friends may speak to him seriously about the necessity of preparing for death, the thoughts and reflections caused by their words will throw him into despair, at the sight of the everlasting misery with which he is threatened. The faith of the sinner which had been extinguished during life, revives at the hour of death, and unveils to him the great truths of religion. Then he believes that which he did not wish to believe when he was in health. But how will this dying sinner strengthen himself against the fear of a hell opened beneath his feet? Can he find strength in the virtues he has

practised? But his whole life has been a life of crime. Will he console himself with the thought of the mercy of God? Ah! he knows that he has abused the divine mercy, and that in punishment for such abuse he deserves to be abandoned by God.

"I called and you refused." (Prov. i, 24)

"You shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin." (John viii, 21)

"Whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. xi, 15)

"This wicked man [Antiochus] prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy." (2 Mach. ix, 13)

"When he himself could not now abide his own stench." (*Ibid.* 12)

"At death the terror of the sinner increases as the hour of retribution draws near; and the more closely he approaches the judgment-seat of God, the more he dreads the divine judgment." (S. Greg.)

"Do you wish to know why we fear death? It is because we have not carefully avoided sin, we have not a pure conscience. If our conscience were free from stain, death could not frighten us." (S. Chrys.)

It is true that if the sinner repented sincerely, he could even now recover the grace of God. But how can he repent at this supreme moment? He will perhaps give some sign of sorrow; but it is a forced sorrow, a sorrow that makes him quit sin only because he can no longer commit it.

What will reassure the sinner then? . . . The Sacraments? Alas! he receives them only because he is pressed to do so, and without proper dispositions.

He embraces the crucifix, . . . but with what feelings? How can he hope in the merits of a Divine Saviour with whose life his own has been so little in conformity? Ought he not rather recognize in Him an angry judge, who is about to condemn him? This thought throws him into the most frightful despair.

"The fear of death is fallen upon me." (Ps. liv, 5)

However, the priest of God is there . . . he prays . . . he says: "Go forth, Christian soul." . . . Christian soul!

Yes, his soul goes forth, and it is dragged by the devils into the eternal abyss!

"Woe to you, ungodly men, who have abandoned the law of the most high Lord. If you die, in malediction shall be your portion." (Eccli. xli, 11)

"Thy pride is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down; under thee shall the moth be strewed and the worms shall be thy covering." (Is. xiv, 11)

"Come and see." (John i, 39)

Does not the lot of the sinner make you tremble? That lot will be

yours, avaricious, voluptuous, unlawful possessors of the property of others. That will be your destiny, sinners, whoever you may be, if you do not give up sin and return to God.

"You shall die in your sins." (John viii, 21)

"He [Zambri] died in his sins, which he had sinned, doing evil before the Lord." (3 Kings xvi, 19)

"The gate is closed. You will cry: Lord, Lord, open to us. . . . I know you not." (Matth. xxv, 12)

"He died . . . and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi, 22)

"O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv, 3)

"When the wicked man is dead, there shall be no hope any more; and the expectation of the solicitous shall perish." (Prov. xi, 7)

"No matter how long sinners may live, they are taken out of life suddenly and unexpectedly. Death comes suddenly to the man who has not thought of it previously. Of a hundred thousand men who have led evil lives there is hardly one that merits the grace of a happy death. This I hold to be true, having learned it from long experience." (S. Jerome)

"Before thy death work justice; for in hell there is no finding food." (Eccli. xiv, 17)

"If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Eccle. xi, 3)

"The death of the wicked is very evil: do you understand why it is so? It is evil because at death the sinner loses all he has prized in this world; it is worse still in the separation of the soul and body; but it is most evil of all in the twofold grief of worms and fire." (S. Bern.)

"A great horror will fill the souls of the impious as they go forth out of this world; a great sorrow will seize them in their passage from time to eternity; and a bitter shame will crush them as they stand in the sight of the great God." (*Id.*)

"Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." (Matth. xxv, 13)

Divisions

I

The death of sinners.

1. They die as they have lived.

This appalling truth is proved from,

1°. Sacred Scripture;
2°. The Holy Fathers;
3°. The most solid reasons and daily experience.

2. They die in despair.

1°. In the past they see frightful sins for which they cannot now do penance.

2°. In the present they see false goods, to which they were too much attached, but which they are now forced to abandon.

3°. In the future they see infinite evils, of which they had not a wholesome fear during life, but which they can no longer avoid.

II

The death of the sinner is terrible,

1. Because of the confusion with which he is filled: he remembers that he has done little or nothing for God and for the salvation of his soul.

2. Because of the despair of divine mercy into which he falls.

3. Because of the surprises of death, and of the sudden strokes that often sweep sinners away when they think least of eternity.

4. Because of the impenitence in which he dies.

XVI

DEATH OF THE JUST

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints." (Ps. cxv, 15)

Who does not desire to die the death of the saints? Even the impious and libertines desire it, and sometimes say: "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to theirs." (Num. xxiii, 10)

It is indeed strange that, fearing nothing so much as a bad death, people take so little care to lead a good life. Let us consider: I. The advantages of a good death; II. The means of obtaining it.

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF A GOOD DEATH

Death, no matter how we look at it, is very advantageous to a good Christian. "In every respect death is good for the pious man." (S. Aug.) He finds his consolation chiefly in three things: (1) in the ending of his misery; (2) in the company of his good works; (3) in the pardon and remission of his sins.

1. *In the ending of man's misery*

What had not the just man to suffer during this life? Mockery, contempt, calumny, temptations. All that is past.

"The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; but they are in peace." (Wis. iii, 1-2)

"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii, 13)

"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi, 20)

"I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them joyful after their sorrow." (Jer. xxxi, 13)

"I will heal their breaches, I will love them freely; for My wrath is turned away from them." (Os. xiv, 5)

"I have afflicted thee, and I will afflict thee no more. I will break in pieces his rod with which he struck thy back, and I will burst thy bonds asunder." (Nahum, i, 12, 13)

At the hour of death the just man looks on his sufferings not only

as troubles that are past, but also as the source and foundation of a happiness that will never end. God Himself gives him the assurance of this.

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a moment of indignation have I hid my face a little while from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee." (Is. liv, 7, 8)

What are those past sufferings? They are nothing in comparison with eternity. Past sorrows, where are you? Sighs, pains, insults, persecutions, sickness, during life the just man did not, perhaps, know all the merit of these; but now that he is ready to give back his soul into the hands of God, he recalls them to mind, and he understands, he knows that all those past sufferings are about to conduct him to eternal happiness. What a consolation!

"This is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with Me, saith the Lord." (Is. liv, 17)

"Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of dead sleep, the dregs of the cup of My indignation, thou shall not drink it again any more. And I will put it in the hand of them that addressed thee, and have said to thy soul: Bow down that we may go over." (Is. li, 22, 23)

"O poor little one, tossed with tempest, without all comfort, . . . thou shalt be founded in justice; depart far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee." (Is. liv, 11, 14)

"We should not dread that which frees us from every cause of fear." (Tert.)

2. *In the company of his good works*

At death all other things will abandon us; our works alone, good or bad, will never quit us. His good works will go before, will accompany, and will follow the just man in the great journey to eternity.

They will go before him to beg that the infinite mercy of God may open Heaven to him.

"Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house . . . and thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up. Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall hear. Thou shalt cry out, and He shall say: Here I am. . . . When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness. . . . Then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high

places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father." (Is. lviii, 7–14)

They will accompany him. Example: Ezechias. "He wrought that which was good and right and true before the Lord his God . . . according to the law and the ceremonies, desiring to seek his God with all his heart, and he did it and prospered." (2 Par. xxxi, 20, 21)

His good works will never leave him; he presents them to God in order to obtain the divine mercy.

"I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is pleasing before Thee." (4 Kings xx, 3)

The good works of the just man will constitute all the glory and beauty of his entrance into Heaven.

"She hath opened her hand to the needy. . . . Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day. . . . Her children [works] rose up and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised her. . . . Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her works praise her in the gates." (Prov. xxxi, 20 ff.)

Finally, they will follow him into eternity.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." (Apoc. xiv, 13). Why?

"From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their lābors: for their works follow them." (*Ibid.*)

"[God] rendered to the just the wages of their labors." (Wis. x, 17)

"God will render to every man according to his works. . . . But glory and honor and peace to every one that worketh good." (Rom. ii, 6, 10)

3. *In the pardon and remission of his sins*

The thought of his past sins does not trouble the just man. He is grieved at having committed them, it is true; but he is consoled by the sincere sorrow that fills his heart for having offended God, and by his determination to do all he can to satisfy the divine justice and to suffer all the pains of his illness in atonement for his faults.

"[The penitent] by his sorrow recovers spiritual life; and when his heart is touched with grief he weeps, and by his tears is raised up to heavenly joys." (S. Greg.)

He has arranged all his affairs; he has made a good confession; his conscience is at rest, and he looks on his sins as washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

"Thou hast been a leader to the people which Thou hast redeemed; and in Thy strength Thou hast carried them to Thy holy habitation." (Exod. xv, 13)

Such is the confidence of the just man at death.

"Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." (Luke vii, 47)

"Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. iv, 8)

O happy death of the just man! Go see the just man, says the prophet; tell him the good news, say to him that all is well for him.

"Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings." (Is. iii, 10)

"With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed." (Eccli. i, 13)

"Precious is the death of the saints; clearly precious as the end of their labors, as the crowning of victory, as the gate of eternal life, and the entrance to perfect security." (S. Bern.)

II. MEANS OF OBTAINING THE GRACE OF A HOLY DEATH

To prepare for it (1) by a holy life, (2) by a sincere repentance, (3) by a perfect conformity of our death with that of Jesus Christ.

1. *By a holy life*

Generally speaking, a man dies as he has lived; as his life is, so his death will be.

"Who is there that does not die as he has lived?" (S. Bern.)

"We had in ourselves the answer of death." (2 Cor. i, 9)

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 7, 8)

"He who has lived a holy life, cannot die a bad death, and he can hardly die a good death who has lived a bad life." (S. Aug.)

It is true that, though having begun well, a man may end badly, and that, though he may have led an evil life, yet his death may be a happy one; because God is the Master of His graces, which He grants to whom He pleases; and this should cause us to keep ourselves in profound humility. But this does not take from the truth of what I have said, that, generally speaking, God gives a happy death as the reward of a good life, and punishes an evil life by a miserable death.

"He [God] shall destroy the wicked and sinners together; and they that have forsaken the Lord shall be consumed. For they shall be confounded for the idols to which they have sacrificed." (Is. i, 28, 29)

We must hasten to live well.

"Remember that death is not slow. . . . Do good to thy friend [thy soul] before thou die. . . . Before thy death work justice; for in hell there is no finding food. All flesh shall fade as grass, and as the leaf that springeth out on a green tree." (Eccli. xiv, 12–18)

"Those who in their lives accomplish the work God gave them to do, who are meritorious in their works and patterns of great virtue, are

making right use of the present life, and are sowing the seeds of future happiness." (S. Euch.) Imitate them.

"If you have learned to live well, you will learn to die well." (S. Aug.)

2. By a sincere repentance

Contrition. . . . Firm purpose of amendment. . . . A good and even a general confession. . . . To satisfy God by works of penance, and to make restitution to our neighbor.

"Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping, and in mourning." (Joel ii, 12)

"I say that that man is truly penitent who weeps day and night over his sins, who no longer indulges in evil, who does not seek to gratify his concupiscence, and who deprives himself of the voluptuous pleasures in which he formerly took delight." (S. Ambr.)

"If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all My commandments, . . . living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities which he hath done." (Ezech. xviii, 21, 22)

3. *By a perfect conformity of our death with that of Jesus Christ*

Finally, the third thing we must do to secure a good death is to prepare for our death as Christ prepared for His. In order to prepare for death our Lord withdrew from His disciples: "He was withdrawn away from them." (Luke xxii, 41). A sick man should withdraw his heart and affections entirely from this world. Christ accepted His sufferings and death: "Not my will, but Thine be done." (Luke xxii, 42). This is what the Christian should do. Jesus Christ prayed: "Being in an agony He prayed the longer." (*Ibid.* 43). At the approach of death a sick man should pray more fervently and desire to be united to Christ.

"Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i, 23)

"For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii, 25)

"When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli, 3)

"Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest?" (Ps. liv, 7)

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day." (2 Tim. iv, 7, 8)

"For I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day." (*Ibid.* i, 12)

"Go forth, why do you fear? Go forth, my soul, why do you hesitate? For close on seventy years you have served Christ faithfully, and do you now fear to die?" (S. Jer.)

"Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil. . . . And thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Ps. xxii, 4–8)

Divisions

I

There are three reasons why the *death of the just* is *full of joy and happiness.*

1. It puts an end to the toils, the cares, and the sufferings of this life, and to the dangerous occasions that might cause the eternal ruin of the soul.
2. It puts the just in possession of eternal happiness.
3. The change which death procures for them fills them with an ineffable joy.

II

1. The just man *dies without regret* for what he leaves behind him.
2. He dies *full of confidence* in what awaits him.

III

To *die a holy death:*

1. We must watch carefully during our whole life, so as not to be surprised by death.
2. We must, as it were, serve a continual apprenticeship to death by the practice of daily mortification: "I die daily."
3. We must perform all our actions as if each one was to be the last of our life, as if we were to die immediately after having done it.

XVII

THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT

"Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matth. xxii, 16)

Since Jesus Christ has told us often and clearly that many are called, but few are chosen, let us make this terrible truth the subject of our instruction. I will show you: I. That there are few saved; II. That if we are not of that number, the fault is our own.

I. THERE ARE FEW SAVED

The Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, and reason concur in proving this.

a. *The Holy Scriptures*

The Book of Genesis tells us that at the time of the deluge humanity was corrupt and that in Abraham's time there were not ten just men in Sodom.

"All flesh had corrupted its way." (Gen. vi, 12)

"Wilt Thou destroy the just with the wicked? . . . What if ten be found there?" (Gen. xviii, 23, 32)

Must we not conclude that there were not many just men among them?

Does not the history of the Jewish people, which can be called the history of the infidelity and revolt of that people, show that the number of the elect is small?

And does the licentious conduct of the greater number of Christians justify us in believing that their end will be a happy one?

"There shall not enter into it [the new Jerusalem] anything defiled." (Apoc. xxi, 27)

"How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it." (Matth. vii, 14)

"Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able." (Luke xiii, 24)

b. *The Fathers of the Church*

"How many of those in our city will be saved, think you? It is sad that I should have to say so, nevertheless I will say it: In so many thousands there cannot be found a hundred who will be saved, and

even of those I am doubtful. Why? How great is the malice of sin among the young people! How great the indifference among those who have grown old! No one takes care of the soul of his child, no one has any zeal for his own salvation." (S. Chrys.)

Is our age less corrupt than that of John Chrysostom, when the fervor of the first Christians still continued? Ah! Lord, if I put here the question which S. John Chrysostom put to the people of the city in which he preached—how many of the inhabitants of this parish would be saved? For how do they live? Except a small number of Christians, who have a horror of sin, almost all the rest abandon themselves to a sinful and disorderly life.

"If you take away the very small number of those who fly from evil, every assembly of Christians is hardly anything more than a rabble plunged into vice." (Salvian)

"That is indeed a terrible saying. Many are called, but few are chosen; because while all come to an end, but few are led to the heavenly kingdom." (S. Greg.)

"Who can say: I have been chosen, I am among those destined to eternal life, I am among the number of the children?" (S. Bern.)

"Be of the number of the few if you wish to be among the chosen." (S. Aug.)

c. *Reason*

You know that one can be saved by one or other of two ways only, the way of innocence, or that of penance.

But (1) has the world ever seen less innocence? Where are those happy souls who have preserved their baptismal innocence? Alas! the life of the greater number of Christians is but a round of confessions and relapses. Neither truth nor charity is any longer seen on this earth. Almost all have torn away the bulwark that preserved innocence in their hearts. Blasphemy, deceit, the most horrible crimes have flooded the whole earth.

"Cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed, and blood hath touched blood." (Os. iv, 2)

"There is not any man just, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. All have turned out of the way . . . there is no one that doth good, there is not so much as one." (Rom. iii, 10–12)

(2) There is then only one way by which we can save our souls, that of penance. But where are the true penitents? Where shall we find those who, after having spent the best part of their life in sin, seriously endeavor to satisfy the justice of God, and to atone for their sins by good works and tears of sincere repentance?

"There is none that doth penance for his sins, saying: What have I done?" (Jer. viii, 6)

It is difficult to find one who has preserved his baptismal innocence; nevertheless,

"I have had less difficulty in finding those who have preserved their innocence, than in finding those who have done suitable penance." (S. Ambr.)

II. IF WE ARE NOT AMONG THE SAVED, THE FAULT IS OUR OWN

"Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me." (Os. xiii, 9)

1. God wishes to save us, and often we do not want to be saved; 2. He gives us graces and we abuse them; 3. From this results the reprobation of so many sinners.

1. *God wishes to save us, and often we do not want to be saved*

"This is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thess. iv, 3)

"I desire . . . that supplications, prayers, intercessions, be made . . . for all men. . . . For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii, 4, 2)

"We hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful." (1 Tim. iv, 10)

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." (Jer. xxxi, 3)

"Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live?" (Ez. xviii, 23)

"This is the will of the Father, who sent Me, that of all that He hath given Me I should lose nothing." (John vi, 39)

"Who gave Himself a redemption for all." (1 Tim. ii, 6)

"Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9)

"I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of affliction." (Jer. xxix, 11)

"In very deed I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him." (Acts x, 34, 35)

"As many as you shall find, call to the marriage." (Matth. xxii, 9)

"God wishes all men to be saved, but not so as to take away their free will." (S. Aug.)

"God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living." (Wis. i, 13)

"He chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." (Eph. i, 4)

"Being predestined according to the purpose of Him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will." (*Ibid.* 11)

"Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformable to the image of His Son." (Rom. viii, 29)

And very often we ourselves do not wish to be saved. God calls us, and we do not put ourselves to any trouble to correspond to His holy will. How many times has He not warned you by the voice of your pastors, preachers, confessors, that you would lose your souls if you did not break off those habits of drunkenness, of impurity, etc.? But you have paid no attention to the warnings, and have never really wished to return to God by a sincere conversion.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather together her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not?" (Matth. xxiii, 37)

"I called and you refused; I stretched out My hand and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions." (Prov. i, 24, 25)

"O Lord, Thou hast bruised them, and they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return." (Jer. v, 3)

"Through deceit they have refused to know Me, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix, 6)

"Judas would perhaps have found a remedy if he had not hastened to the halter." (S. Leo)

2. *God gives us graces and we abuse them*

The means of salvation are not wanting to us. God gives us not only that exterior light that strikes the eye, He offers to us also the interior and spiritual light that enlightens the soul; but unhappily we do not always accept it. What is the cause of this? It is our mind which allows itself to be blinded, our heart which allows itself to be corrupted by a miserable cupidity and an unhappy attachment to the follies and vanities of this world.

"There is given to each one, without any merit on his part, the help by which he may strive for the reward; and there is given to each one before he labors, the help that will enable him to receive a reward according to his labor." (S. Ambr.)

"[But] it is a people that provoketh to wrath, and lying children, children that will not hear the law of God." (Is. xxx, 9)

"Go about through the streets of Jerusalem, and see, and consider,

and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment and seeketh faith; and I will be merciful unto it. And though they say: The Lord liveth; this also they will swear falsely. O Lord, open their eyes upon truth: Thou hast struck them and they have not grieved: Thou hast bruised them and they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return." (Jer. v, 1–3)

"The whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 John v, 19)

3. *From this results the reprobation of so many sinners*

For what will God do to avenge the abuse of His graces, and how will He deal with the sinners who have despised them? He will make use of this same contempt to punish them.

"Their soul is delighted in their abominations. Wherefore I also will choose their mockeries, and will bring upon them the things they feared: because I called and there was none that would answer. I have spoken and they heard not: and they have done evil in My eyes and have chosen the things that displease Me." (Is. lxvi, 3, 4)

"I also will laugh at your destruction and will mock." (Prov. i, 26)

"You shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin." (John viii, 21)

"We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let Us forsake her." (Jer. li, 9)

Such is the death of those hardened sinners who, after having long resisted the holy inspirations of God, fall from venial sins into those that are grave, from sins repeated they contract a habit of sin and from a habit of sin they fall into a kind of necessity of sinning; this produces hardness of heart, which leads to the final impenitence that conducts to hell.

Unhappy soul, you are then lost through your own fault, lost for all eternity, because the time of mercy being past, God will never have pity on you.

"My eye shall not spare thee, and I will show thee no pity." (Ezech. vii, 4)

"Who then can be saved?" (Matth. xix, 25)

"With fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Phil. ii, 12)

"Labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i, 10)

"A certain man said to Him [Jesus]: Lord, are they few that are saved? But He said to them: Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. But when the master of the house shall be gone in, and shall shut the door, you shall begin to stand without and knock at the door, saying: Lord,

open to us; and he answering shall say to you: I know you not whence you are. . . . Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Luke xiii, 23–28)

"Let every one depart from iniquity who nameth the name of the Lord . . . and pursue justice, faith, charity, and peace." (2 Tim. ii, 19, 22)

"All run indeed, but one receiveth the prize. So run that you may obtain." (1 Cor. ix, 24)

"To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv, 8)

Divisions

I

Causes of the small number of the elect.

1. Heaven is opened only to the innocent, and to those who have done penance. To which of these classes do you belong?

2. The principles and obligations that are universally ignored or rejected, are those that are indispensable to salvation.

3. The laws by which men regulate their conduct, the principles that have become the rule of the multitude, are laws and principles that are incompatible with salvation." (Massillon)

II

1. Why are there so few chosen?

2. What should we do to assure ourselves that the merciful designs of God in our regard will be fulfilled? (Billot)

III

1. It is certain that *the number of those who are chosen is small.*

2. It is very uncertain *whether we shall be of that number.*

IV

In order to understand that there is *no mystery in the small number of those who are saved,* we have only to consider the life and the death of the greater number of Christians. I say then:

1. That the number of the saved must be *very small,* because there are very few who live in the grace of God; and

2. Because there are very few who die in the grace of God.

XVIII

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

"Give an account of thy stewardship." (Luke xvi, 2)

Before the general judgment there will be for each one of us a particular judgment at the moment of death; the words that were addressed to the steward in the Gospel will be addressed to us: "Give an account." Let us consider: I. That there is a particular judgment when we shall have to give a most exact account of all the good and all the evil we shall have done; II. What means we can employ to forestall the rigors of this judgment.

I. THERE IS FOR EACH ONE, AT THE MOMENT WHEN HE BREATHES HIS LAST BREATH, A PARTICULAR JUDGMENT THAT WILL DECIDE HIS ETERNAL DESTINY

"It is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment." (Heb. ix, 27)

To live, to die, to be judged, behold the whole lot of man.

"Behold Thou hast made my days measurable." (Ps. xxxviii, 6)

"There is no going back of our end; for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth." (Wis. ii, 5)

"We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. v, 10)

1. *We must give an account of the good we shall have done*

There are gifts of nature, of fortune, and of grace. The gifts of nature regard the body and the soul. What use have you made of your body? . . . of the faculties of your soul? . . . of your property? . . . How have you gained it? Of "that which remaineth give alms." (Luke xi, 41). Have you done so?

Gifts of grace. . . . Holy thoughts, inspirations, instructions, confessions, Communions, etc. . . . what profit have you derived from them? Ah! How great the value of one grace! And what an account must he not give who will have received hundreds of them?

"When the gifts increase, the accounts to be given of them increase also." (S. Greg.)

And what answer shall he who will have received thousands of graces, give to Jesus Christ, when He will reproach him for having abused His Blood and merits? Ungrateful sinner, what could I have done for your salvation that I have not done?

"What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes and it hath brought forth wild grapes?" (Is. v, 4)

"I will judge every one of you according to his ways." (Ezech. xxxiii, 20)

"God is not a respecter of persons." (Acts x, 34)

2. We must give an account of the evil we have done

We shall be examined, not only regarding gross sins, but also about voluntary thoughts of impurity, envy, revenge.

"Inquisition shall be made into the thoughts of the ungodly." (Wis. i, 9)

At present you see those sins one after another only, but then you shall see them all together. Though you would only commit three sins a week, that would be one hundred and fifty sins in a year; and in ten, twenty years, what a number! The thought of so rigorous an examination made King David tremble: "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off; my path and my line Thou hast searched out." (Ps. cxxviii, 3)

"I will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will set all thy abominations against thee." (Ezech. vii, 3)

"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matth. xii, 36)

"Thou wilt render to every man according to his works." (Ps. lxi, 12)

"I feared all my works, knowing that Thou didst not spare the offender." (Job ix, 28)

We shall give an account, not only of our own faults, but also of those of others, if we have co-operated in them. . . . Innkeepers . . . masters and mistresses . . . fathers and mothers. . . .

"Thou hast rather honored thy sons than Me." (1 Kings ii, 29)

Disguise, forget your sins as much as you please. . . . "He [the Lord] will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise from God." (1 Cor. iv, 5)

"Thou writest bitter things against me, and wilt consume me for the sins of my youth." (Job xiii, 26)

Our *conscience* is like a great book in which all our deeds are written; the sinner keeps this book closed during his life, but at the hour of death

it will be opened. Those acts of treachery, those false oaths, those impure acts—all will accuse him: "We are your works; we will be with you always; we will go with you to judgment." (S. Bern.)

"The Judge will not be influenced by favor, nor turned aside by pity, nor corrupted by money, nor appeased by satisfaction." (S. Aug.)

"The Lord shall be known when He executes judgment: He is not known now in the time of His mercy." (S. Aug.)

II. MEANS OF FORESTALLING THE RIGORS OF THIS JUDGMENT

However rigorous this particular judgment may be, we can anticipate its rigor, and render our Judge favorable to us by judging ourselves sincerely now.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi, 31)

"I wish to be presented before the face of His anger as one already judged, not as one to be judged." (S. Bern.)

To do this we have only to consider the conduct of the steward in the Gospel, and to imitate what there is of good in his example.

1. *To enter into ourselves and to acknowledge our guilt.*

"The steward said within himself: What shall I do?" (Luke xvi, 3)

Let us acknowledge we have been unjust stewards, and say: "O just, avenging Judge, hear my prayer. Pardon my sins before that day of dread account." (*Dies Irae*)

"God has placed it in our power to decide how we shall be judged." (S. Aug.)

2. "To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed," said the steward in the Gospel. This is an image of many sinners who, though touched by grace, have not the courage to *practise works of penance. . . .* But let them not be discouraged: "The Lord who is good will show mercy to all them who with their heart seek the God of their fathers; and will not impute it to them that they are not sanctified." (2 Paral. xxx, 18, 19)

If they cannot do the penance of the strong, let them do that of the weak. Let them bear patiently the crosses and afflictions with which this life is filled. Let them accept sufferings and illness in expiation of their sins. Oh! how beneficial such practices would be in these unhappy times, when evils swooping down on every side, come to us as messengers of death.

3. As the steward sought to gain friends, "that they may receive me into their houses" (Luke xvi, 4), so we must *make friends with what*

the Gospel calls the mammon of iniquity: "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke xvi, 9)

You have made a bad use of the goods given you by God; you must for the future make a good use of them. Hasten to make reparation for the injustice of which you have been guilty; give alms to the poor, and be assured that when you do good to them, you are doing greater good to yourself: "For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." (Job iv, 11)

4. Finally, the unfaithful steward changes his conduct. The sinner also must *think seriously of his conversion.* That is the means without which all others would be useless. The hour when God will demand from us an account of all our acts, will certainly come, and perhaps is not as far off as we imagine.

The last hour is come. . . . "Now is the acceptable time." (2 Cor. vi, 9)

Sinners, think seriously on your state before the sentence is pronounced. Spare no means by which you can render your Judge favorable to you. Is it necessary to root up bad habits? . . . to quit the occasions of sin? . . . to pardon an enemy? Work at it unceasingly.

Enter into the feelings of the Apostle, S. Paul: "Having hope in God . . . that there shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust. And herein do I endeavor to have always a conscience without offence towards God and towards men." (Acts xxiv, 15, 16)

"Blessed will be that man who is influenced in all he does by the thought of the divine judgment." (S. Hilary)

Divisions

I

The sinner summoned to the judgment-seat of God.

1. The surprise of the soul at that moment, when it sees itself separated from all, from its relatives, etc. It is alone and has for company nothing but its own works, which are the cause of fear to it.

2. The terror with which it is seized at that moment, is like that with which Balthazar was filled.

3. The alarm caused to the sinner by a guilty conscience, which accuses and condemns him in advance, especially as he knows he cannot in any way influence the just Judge.

4. When he thinks of the importance of the matter, that there is

question of his happiness or misery for all eternity, in vain does he beg: "A truce until morning" . . . he cannot obtain anything.

II

The sinner accused at the tribunal of God.

He will be examined regarding the sins he committed, the good badly done, or which he neglected; the abuse of the benfits he received from God; the graces, the lights given to him. He shall have to give an account of his natural talents and of his temporal goods, and of the sins he should have prevented.

III

The sinner condemned at the tribunal of God.

1. An irrevocable decree of reprobation against the criminal: having examined and weighed all, God judges that he is unworthy of eternal happiness.

2. An infallible judgment: it is not liable to error, as is the judgment of men.

3. A judgment by which that soul is eternally abandoned by God and delivered to the power of the devil.

4. An irrevocable decree, which is executed as soon as it is made: "Depart into everlasting fire."

XIX

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

"Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty." (Luke xxi, 27)

If ever words were spoken that should fill us with terror, these are they; and of scenes that make us tremble I do not know one which, with the help of divine grace, will more efficaciously stir up salutary emotions in our souls, than that of the last judgment. It is in vain, sinners, that you now close your eyes, so that you may not see your Saviour; you shall see Him then: "Then they shall see." Ah! how terrible that sight will be for a sinner who does not wish to give himself to Jesus Christ, nor to profit by His first coming! Consider; I. The sinner judged and condemned by Jesus Christ; II. The sinner judged and condemned by himself.

I. THE SINNER JUDGED AND CONDEMNED BY JESUS CHRIST

The certainty of the last judgment is an article of faith.

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was appointed by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead." (Acts x, 42)

"He [the Father] hath given him [Christ] power to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man." (John v, 27)

Jesus Christ as man will judge all men.

"That Nature will be the judge because it has submitted to judgment, it will judge because it has been judged; it has been unjustly judged, it will judge justly." (S. Aug.)

Signs that will precede the judgment.

"The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved. And then there shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And He shall send His angels with a trumpet, and a great voice; and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds." (Matth. xxiv, 29–31)

Men shall "wither away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world." (Luke xxi, 26)

"Behold, the day of the Lord shall come, a cruel day, and full of indignation, and of wrath, and fury, to lay the land desolate, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it." (Is. xiii, 9)

"The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people and its princes." (Is. iii, 14)

"I will gather together all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat; and I will plead with them there for My people, and for My inheritance, Israel." (Joel iii, 2)

Two specially malicious insults were offered to our Lord during His passion: the first, dragging Him before the most unjust of all judges; the second, falsely imputing crime to Him. To punish these insults by a just return, He will oblige sinners to appear before Him, and will compare the criminal indulgence of their lives with the holiness of His own.

1. His presence shall confound them; 2. the holiness of His life shall condemn them.

1. *His presence shall confound them*

So little consideration did our Divine Lord receive during His Passion, that not even the form of justice was observed towards Him. He shall judge those who judged Him, and shall punish their iniquities.

"Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matth. xxvi, 64)

He was judged and condemned unjustly.

"Arise, O God, judge Thy own cause; remember Thy reproaches with which the foolish man hath reproached Thee all the day. Forget not the voices of Thy enemies." (Ps. lxxiii, 22, 23)

Then the words of the Royal Prophet will be fulfilled, then Christ will punish all the outrages inflicted on Him.

"God shall come manifestly; our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall burn before Him." (Ps. xlix, 3, 4)

Thus the damned will desire nothing so earnestly as to escape from the sight of this Sovereign Judge, and they will cry out:

"They say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?" (Apoc. vi, 16, 17)

But their desires are vain! The Jews shall see Him, the gentiles shall see Him, Christians who have so often inflicted outrages on Him shall see Him. The just will see Him for their consolation, the wicked, for their confusion.

"They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John xix, 37)

"Every eye shall see Him." (Apoc. i, 7)

"The wicked shall see, and shall be angry, he shall gnash his teeth and pine away." (Ps. cxi, 10)

"The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him." (Job xx, 27)

"They shall go into the holes of rocks, and into the caves of the earth from the face of the fear of the Lord, when He shall rise up to strike the earth." (Is. ii, 19)

"I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations." (Nahum iii, 5)

"The great day of the Lord is near. . . . That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high bulwarks." (Sophon. i, 14–16)

"As often as I reflect on that day, my whole body trembles with terror: whether I eat or drink, or whatever else I do, that awful trumpet seems to sound in my ears: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." (S. Jerome)

"It will be impossible to remain concealed, it will be intolerable to appear." (S. Anselm)

"What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer?" (Job xxxi, 14)

"Thou art terrible [O Lord], and who shall resist Thee?" (Ps. lxxv, 8)

"Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming? and who shall stand to see Him?" (Malach. iii, 2)

"Even the saints will not behold God's presence without fear." (S. Jerome)

2. *The holiness of His life shall condemn them*

Sinners shall not only be confounded at the presence of Jesus Christ, they shall also be condemned by the holiness of His life.

"He that despiseth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge in the last day." (John xii, 48)

That life so pure and holy, that Gospel so incontrovertible in its truths, so exact in its morality, the holy religion destined to make me happy, will render me inexcusable, if, after having professed it as a Christian, I have had the misfortune to contradict it by my conduct: "The word which I have spoken," etc.

How great, then, shall be the confusion of the sinner, whose life was

totally opposed to Jesus Christ and His Gospel! . . . What confusion for the avaricious man . . . the proud . . . the ambitious . . . the voluptuous and impure man . . . for the drunkard and the dissolute . . . for the man addicted to anger and revenge!

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: nor hidden, that shall not be known." (Luke xii, 2)

"He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. iv, 5)

Ah! sinners, whoever you may be, that have never wished to return to God, that have always despised Jesus Christ and His graces, remember that one day He will be your judge. Yes, that adorable Saviour, who has done so much to gain your love, will come on the last day to judge you, and it is He Himself who will pronounce the sentence of your condemnation.

"I will judge him there for the transgression by which he hath despised me." (Ezech. xvii, 20)

And then will come to pass that which was foretold by the prophet: "The just shall see, and shall rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth." (Ps. cvi, 42)

Speak then, reprobate soul: "Tell, if thou hast anything to justify thyself." (Is. xliii, 26)

Alas! Lord, I have no answer to give; "Thou art just, O Lord; and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. cxviii, 137)

"I will judge justices." (Ps. lxxiv, 3)

"If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear." (1 Pet. iv, 8)

"I will reprove thee and set before thy face." (Ps. xlix, 21)

"The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Is. ii, 17)

"Behold the Lord cometh with thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove all the ungodly for all the works of their ungodliness." (Jude v, 14, 15)

II. THE SINNER JUDGED AND CONDEMNED BY HIMSELF

The sinner shall be forced to condemn himself, his conscience shall be his judge; it will convict him of two things, which will be the cause of his despair and condemnation: (1) that he could have saved his soul; (2) that he did not wish to do so.

1. *He could have saved his soul*

How many means of salvation has he not had! "I have received baptism," he shall have to acknowledge; "I have received the faith and the Gospel. That Gospel taught me what I should do to save my soul. How often have I not heard it preached! How many times have I not

received the sacraments! All these are means of salvation which render me inexcusable."

"What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes?" (Is. v, 4)

"The soul, conscious of evil, while it seems to suffer no pain, believes that God will not judge it, and so the judgments of God are taken away from before its face, which in itself may be the supreme condemnation." (S. Aug.)

"In this judgment there will be the accusing sins on one side, and on the other, the dread justice; below, the open jaws of hell; above, the angry Judge; inside, a guilty conscience; outside, the world in arms [against the sinner]." (S. Anselm)

2. He did not wish to be saved

The sinner will see that he could have saved his soul, but that he did not wish to do so, and that if he is condemned, it is through his own fault.

"I called and you refused." (Prov. i, 24)

"Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather together her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not?" (Matth. xxii, 37)

"You have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions. I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared." (Prov. i, 25, 26)

"Ah! I will comfort myself over my adversaries, I will be revenged of my enemies." (Is. i, 24)

Like the brothers of Joseph they will then say: "We deserve to suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother, seeing the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this affliction come upon us." (Gen. xlii, 21)

A sad but true picture of sinners on the day of judgment! They shall see and be forced to acknowledge that they deserve the punishment inflicted on them.

"We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things have passed away like

a shadow. . . . But we are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these the sinners said in hell." (Wis. v, 4–14)

What regrets! . . . What remorse! . . . What despair!

"Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." (Dan. v, 27)

"Destruction is thy own, O Israel." (Os. xiii, 9)

"They shall have no speech of comfort in the day of wrath." (Wis. iii, 18)

"We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. v, 10)

"What does it matter to you when it [the judgment] comes? So live as if it were at hand, and when it does come, you will not fear it.' (S. Aug.)

"The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (John v, 28, 29)

"At whose [Christ's] coming all men will rise again in their bodies; and they will give an account of their works. And the just shall go into eternal life; but the wicked shall go into everlasting fire." (Athanasian Creed)

"Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matth. xxv, 34)

"Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (*Ibid.* 41)

"Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke xxi, 36)

"We must keep the thought of God's judgment always before our minds." (S. Chrys.)

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

"Pierce my flesh with Thy fear; for I am afraid of Thy judgments." (Ps. cxviii, 120)

"What shall I, a poor sinner, say then? Save me, O Fount of pity! Pardon me before that day of dread account. Remember, sweet Jesus, . . . do not let me be lost on that day. My prayers do not deserve to be heard by Thee, but do Thou in Thy goodness graciously hear them: Call me with the blessed." (*Dies Irae*)

Divisions

I

God has done all things both for Himself and for His elect. When He determined to judge the world He had two principal ends in view, the one to do justice to Himself, and the other to do justice to His saints.

1. Judgment that will avenge the outrages the world has inflicted on God.

2. Judgment that will avenge the injuries the world has inflicted on the elect. (Bourdaloue)

II

1. At the judgment-seat of God the sinner will be overwhelmed with the most bitter confusion.

2. At the judgment-seat of God the sinner will be condemned with the greatest severity. (Billot)

III

1. What will render the *general judgment terrible* to the sinner, without speaking of the fearful signs that will precede it, is

1°. The manner in which God will demand an exact account of his life, without allowing anything to escape Him;

2°. The end of this judgment, which is the manifestation of consciences, the justification of God's providence, the justice of the sentence of condemnation against the reprobate;

3°. The sad and inevitable result of that judgment, in which the condemned sinners will see themselves without any help and abandoned by all.

2. On the other hand,

1°. The just will be consoled by the testimony of their consciences;

2°. All their good works, which have been hidden and unknown, will be manifested to the whole world;

3°. They will be rewarded and crowned as they deserve.

IV

1. On that day Jesus Christ will exercise the office of a Judge,

1°. Sovereignly enlightened; 2°. Exact and severe; 3°. Incorruptible, inflexible, inexorable.

2. On that day Christ will inflict punishment on men, and we must judge of that punishment by the severity of His justice, and by the enormity of the crimes He shall have to punish.

XX

ETERNITY

"I go to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me: Whither goest Thou?" (John xvi, 5)

How great is the insensibility, the carelessness of men! We are constantly told that everlasting torments or eternal happiness will one day be the lot of all mankind, and yet we never think seriously of eternity. Let us consider: I. The truth of eternity; II. The insensibility of men regarding eternity.

I. THE TRUTH OF ETERNITY

What is eternity? "It is the complete and perfect possession of a never-ending life." (Boëtius)

With regard to God, it is a necessary duration which has never had a beginning and will never have an end. With regard to the angels and men, it has had a commencement, but shall have no end.

"Their time shall be for ever." (Ps. lxxx, 16)

"Say what you will regarding eternity, but no matter what you say, it will be less than the reality." (S. Aug.)

Take, for example, as many years, millions of years, as there are grains of sand on the sea shore; they would be nothing compared with eternity. All those years would end some day, but eternity will never end.

"That which has an end cannot be compared with eternity." (S. Aug.)

"Where you think you will find an end, there eternity begins." (S. Hilary)

"Sorrow continues that it may afflict, nature endures that it may suffer." (S. Aug.)

"And the sinner will think that the abyss is as it were coming to an end." (S. Greg.)

Proofs of the truth of eternity.

1. *The Old Testament*

The Holy Ghost explains it by the mouth of the Prophet Daniel: "Those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some unto

life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always." (Dan. xii, 2)

How long this "always" shall be! How full of despair for the damned!

"He will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and may feel for ever." (Judith xvi, 21)

In this life sinners disregard the threats of God; they laugh when reminded of them; but they will not laugh always.

"Hell hath enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds, and their strong ones, and their people, and their high and glorious ones shall go down into it." (Is. v, 14)

"Why is my sorrow become perpetual, and my wound desperate, so as to refuse to be healed?" (Jer. xv, 18)

"There is neither past nor future in eternity, for the past no longer exists, and the future has not yet come; therefore, what there is, is nothing but the present." (S. Aug.)

It is only the present that always lasts.

2. *The New Testament*

John beginning to preach penance in order to prepare the people to receive the teaching of Jesus Christ, showed them at the same time what punishment is reserved for those who will not appease the anger of God by worthy fruits of penance.

"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matth. iii, 12)

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. These shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting." (Matth. xxv, 41, 46)

"In those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (Apoc. ix, 6)

"The angels, who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, He hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude 6)

On these authorities the Church establishes three great truths, which are so many articles of faith:

(a) The first is, that the word "eternal" must not be taken in a figurative or hyperbolical sense, but in a literal, true, and real sense.

"Who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction." (2 Thess. i, 8, 9)

(b) The second, that the moment a person dies in mortal sin, that

same instant, without delay or interruption, he is hurled into an eternity of torments.

"The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi, 22)

(c) The third, that the fire will be eternal not only in its duration, but also in its action and application. This is why S. Augustine remarks that in the Scriptures it is not only said: "Into eternal fire," but also, "into eternal burning." Therefore there will be eternal burning as well as fire.

"He shall be punished for all that he did, and yet shall not be consumed: according to the multitude of his devices, so also shall he suffer." (Job xx, 18)

"Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched." (Is. Lxvi, 24)

"The wretched immortal creatures shall live in the midst of fire, and unconsuming flames shall envelope the naked body." (S. Cypr.)

But, the libertine will say, is it just that for the sin of a moment we should be condemned to eternal torments! You dare to accuse God of injustice! Is it not enough that faith tells you that God has so decreed? Is not that sufficient to convince you that there is nothing in His decree but what is just? Do you not see how malefactors are punished every day? This murderer has taken only a moment to commit a crime, he is condemned to a frightful prison for the rest of his days. If sin had not confused our judgment, we would easily understand how it is that it deserves eternal pain. Mortal sin is an infinite offence against God; an infinite offence demands an infinite satisfaction. This is why it was necessary that Christ should make satisfaction for us.

Moreover, the sin of him who dies in this unhappy state lasts forever. The sin, not having been pardoned during life, will never be pardoned after death, when there is no longer any redemption.

"Because the disease was not cured, the punishment will be without end." (Euseb.)

"Argue not against God; but rather let those who desire to be free from everlasting punishment, obey the divine precept while there is yet time." (S. Aug.)

"It is the duty of a strict judge to see that he who has never wished to be free from sin in this life, should never be free from punishment in the next." (S. Greg.)

"That which is never atoned for, should be always punished." (S. Bern.)

"The pleasure is momentary, the punishment is eternal." (S. Bern.)

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise from the dead." (Luke xvi, 31)

"[But] you shall know that I am the Lord when I have poured out My indignation upon you." (Ezech. xxii, 22)

II. THE INSENSIBILITY OF MANKIND WITH REGARD TO ETERNITY

It is true, then, that there is an eternity. Nevertheless most men are indifferent with regard to it because, (1) they do not believe in it; (2) or they do not think seriously on it.

1. Many Christians *do not believe in eternity,* at least not with a lively faith. For if they believed in it, could there be greater madness than to live as they do?

If you yourselves, my brethren, were convinced that eternity is inevitable (as St. Ambrose was convinced of it when he said: I must fall into one or other of these two eternities), would you put off your conversion?

"I have abandoned the Lord, and am in danger of eternal ruin." (Tert.)

What inference should we draw from this truth? That *we must employ every possible means to regain the friendship of God.*

"Therefore I meditate, and mortify myself by fasts and penances, in order to recover the friendship of God, whom I offended by sin." (Tert.)

The holy solitary, Martinian, performed severe penances, for which he gave this reason: "I have felt harder things, I have felt severer things, I have seen eternal sufferings."

"Woe to those who must first experience these things before they believe them." (S. Anselm)

2. A still greater number *do not think of eternity.* The prophet says that sinners, who should take precautions to avoid the sad consequences of a bad death, do not condescend even to think of these consequences; and that the judgments of God, which should be always before their minds, are very far from their thoughts.

"There is no regard to their death." (Ps. lxxii, 4)

"Thy judgments are removed from his sight." (Ps. x, 5, Heb.)

"They dispute about that which lasts for a moment only, they care not for that which is eternal. They enter an unknown and unwished for eternity; but, alas! they enter and do not return." (S. Cesarius of Arles)

Must we be astonished if the eternity which follows that death and those judgments makes so slight an impression on them? They trouble themselves only about what is temporal,—and yet, "*quid haec ad aeterni-*

tatem?" For, understand clearly: "Man shall go into the house of his eternity." (Eccle. xii, 5)

"I thought upon the days of old: and I had in my mind the eternal years." (Ps. lxxvi, 6)

"Great thought! The heart of him who thinks of these eternal years will be filled with peace." (S. Aug.)

"Let us be intent upon eternity." (S. Leo)

Consider that "There is no going back of our end." (Wis. ii, 5)

But, alas! after the sinner has passed his whole life in the excessive love of earthly riches and pleasures, it is indeed difficult for him, when on his death-bed, to think of eternity. How do you imagine he can think of it when he is tortured by the pains of illness? He has no longer any hope; and yet his mind is occupied with things of this world only:—Who will get my position? What will become of my children? O blindness of man with regard to eternity!

"O eternity! he who meditates on you, and does not repent, either has no faith, or, if he has faith, has no heart." (S. Aug.)

"Here burn, here cut, here spare not, that you may spare me in eternity." (S. Aug.)

"Fear Him that can destroy both body and soul in hell." (Matth. x, 28)

"Understand, ye senseless among the people: and you fools, be wise at last." (Ps. xciii, 8)

Divisions

I

What is most intolerable in the *pains of hell* is their *eternity*. Let us consider: 1. How faith should strengthen our belief in an unhappy eternity; and 2. How belief in an unhappy eternity should urge us to practise works of faith.

1. Faith sets right the errors regarding eternity. These errors are:

(a) that God is too good to inflict eternal punishment on a sinful soul;

(b) that He is too just to avenge for endless ages that which passed away in an instant;

(c) that He has not power to cause a creature to exist for eternity in sufferings and torments.

2. It makes perfect our lights; because there are not wanting to us reasons to justify the laws of God regarding an unhappy eternity.

(a) The will of the sinner, who would have continued in sin forever if God had allowed him to live forever;

(b) mortal sin, not being atoned for after death, must always exist and undergo the punishment due to it;

(c) sin, offending an infinite God, deserves an infinite punishment.

Faith in an eternity of pain is one of the most powerful motives to cause us to return to a life of grace, or to keep us there, and to help us to live as Christians. Two special qualities of this motive:

1°. It is universal, calculated to influence even the slothful;

2°. it is most evident to the senses. (Bourdaloue)

II

There is an *eternity of pain* reserved in the other life for the chastisement of sinners, to which they are justly condemned. Consider,

1. The truth of the existence of this pain;

2. Its justice and equity. (Claude Joly)

III

Benefits produced by the thought of eternity

1. Eternity, seriously meditated on and well understood, produces in the sinner a spirit of penance for the past.

2. It prevents his relapse into sin.

3. It produces in him a great indifference to and a disrelish for worldly goods. (Claude Joly)

XXI

HELL

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matth. xxv, 41)

You all know that the existence of hell is one of the principal points of belief of the Church, one of the chief articles of our faith, which the greater number of heretics admit as well as we.

I will content myself with showing you that of all evils there is not one greater than that of a lost soul. What then is a lost soul? It is an unhappy being: I. Deprived of all goods; II. Overwhelmed by all evils; III. Tormented for all eternity.

I. A LOST SOUL IS DEPRIVED OF ALL GOODS

A lost soul is deprived of all goods, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

1. *Of all the good things which the sinner enjoys in this life not one will follow him into eternity.*

"The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him; he shall open his eyes and find nothing." (Job xxvii, 19)

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. . . . The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi, 19, 22)

The wealthy sinner made a bad use of his wealth; now he is so poor that of all his past riches, pleasures, glory, there remains to him only a sad memory.

"Son [it was said to him] remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life time. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos." (Luke xvi, 25, 26)

That is the answer which he will hear during all eternity. Not even one drop of water will he receive to cool his burning tongue.

Behold the state to which each damned soul will be reduced, from the moment of its condemnation. Goods, dignities, friends, pleasures, amusements,—it shall see itself deprived of all, and even those things which it employed as instruments to offend God, will be used by Almighty God as instruments for its punishment.

"Those things in which the sinner found pleasure will be used by God as instruments with which to punish him." (S. Aug.)

"As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii, 7)

"By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented." (Wis. xi, 17)

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (Job xxi, 12)

"A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job x, 22)

"Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. xxii, 13)

"The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is hell, and darkness, and pains." (Eccli. xxi, 11)

"To him that is little, mercy is granted: but the mighty shall be mightily tormented." (Wis. vi, 7)

"What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?" (Wis. v, 8)

"They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." (Ps. lxxv, 6)

2. The damned soul is deprived of all spiritual benefits

There is no longer any grace, no longer are there any sacraments. The time of penance and merit is passed: no one will obtain mercy in hell.

"Who shall confess to Thee in hell?" (Ps. vi, 6)

Drunkards, libertines, ask any of your former companions in sin if there is any redemption in hell. Alas! they will answer you: "Out of hell there is no redemption." There is no longer a victim for sin, they will say; we now await only that last and dreadful judgment which shall fill us with confusion before the whole world.

"A certain dreadful expectation of judgment and the rage of a fire which shall consume their adversaries." (Heb. x, 27)

"My eye shall not spare, neither will I show mercy." (Ezech. vii, 9)

3. *The damned soul is deprived of eternal happiness*

There is no eternal happiness for the reprobate. To form a true idea of the loss which he has suffered, it would be necessary to form a true idea of God. In this life the sinner does not perceive the natural connection that exists between God and the soul; but in hell that soul, freed from the senses, will see clearly that it can never be happy without God. Neither the fire, nor the torture inflicted by the devils, will ever equal the agony caused by the thought that shall forever haunt the damned soul: *I have lost God, I have lost Him for nothing, I have lost Him forever!*

"Some shall awake unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always." (Dan. xii, 2)

Who could understand what the agitation of a damned soul will be, attracted on the one side by the perfections of God, who should be the centre of its happiness and of its repose, and, on the other, repulsed, driven back by God's justice? It will wish to unite itself to Him, it will spring towards Him, and this infinitely holy God, seeing in that lost soul all the foul deformity of mortal sin, will cast it away forever, and say to it: "Depart from Me, accursed creature, you have abused my mercy."

"Call His name: Not my people; for you are not My people, and I will not be yours." (Os. i, 9)

"Call her name: without mercy; for I will not add any more to have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly forget them." (Os. i, 6)

Terrible words! strange name! name of separation, of reprobation, of malediction and anathema. Begone, wretched creature, I know you no longer, I am no longer your God, you no longer belong to My people.

"Separation from God inflicts a pain as great as God Himself is great." (S. Aug.)

"They are tortured more by Heaven than by hell." (S. Chrys.)

"Many dread the fire of hell, but I dread above all the sad deprivation of eternal glory; for we, who have not known the grandeur of the heavenly Good, cannot understand how terrible an evil it is to be deprived of that good." (S. Chrys.)

II. THE DAMNED SOUL IS OVERWHELMED BY ALL EVILS

I do not wish to give you any other idea of hell than that given of it in the Holy Scripture itself:

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matth. xxv, 41)

"Depart from Me": Behold the deprivation of God, of which we have just spoken. "Into everlasting fire": that is the pain of sense. From this I conclude: (1) that the principal pain of sense of the damned will be fire; (2) that when the soul is reunited to the body, that pain will torture both soul and body.

1. *The principal pain of sense of the damned soul will be fire*

It is an article of faith that the justice of God will hurl impenitent sinners into the abyss and condemn them to the fire of hell.

"They [the angels] shall cast them into the furnace of fire." (Matth. xiii, 50)

"Fire shall devour them." (Ps. xx, 20)

"Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire." (Luke iii, 9)

"The chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matth. iii, 12)

"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire." (Apoc. xx, 15)

And this fire is a real fire, which will act for all eternity on the souls and bodies of the damned.

"They are tortured in incomprehensible but various ways." (S. Aug.)

From the testimony of the Holy Scriptures we must conclude that this fire will have infinitely more force and activity than our earthly fire, and that the pain caused by an ordinary fire is nothing in comparison with that which will be inflicted by the fire of hell.

"This fire will not be like that of our hearths." (S. Aug.)

"Fire and brimstone and storms of winds shall be the portion of their cup." (Ps. x, 7)

"Thou art changed to be cruel towards me, and in the hardness of Thy hand Thou art against me." (Job xxx, 21)

"Burning coals shall be upon them." (Ps. cxxxix, 11)

"I have trampled on them in My indignation, and have trodden them down in My wrath." (Is. lxiii, 3)

"If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." (John xv, 6)

"The greatest pains a man can suffer [in this life], when compared with the fire of hell, are not merely light, they are nothing." (S. Aug.)

"They shall suffer all torments in one fire." (S. Chrys.)

2. When body and soul are reunited, this pain will torture both

This is why the saints call hell the treasury of the wrath of God: "Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath." (Rom. ii, 5). All the powers of the soul of the damned will be tormented: the memory, by the recollection of crimes; the understanding, by the ever-present thought of an evil always present; the will, by a keen and bitter regret, produced by the eternal loss; there will be a worm of conscience that will never die, and a fire that will never be extinguished.

"Their worm dieth not and their fire is not extinguished." (Mark ix, 45)

In the body each member will have its punishment: the eyes, the mouth, the nose, the hands. But how can these horrible tortures be explained? To give expression to the agony he experienced, the rich

man in hell allowed these words only to escape from him: "I am tormented in this flame." (Luke xvi, 24)

Let us open our eyes to the sad gloom of these flames and behold the evil with which the sinner is threatened. O sinners, if the fear of such a punishment does not touch you, and cause you to give up sin, I have only one question to put to you with the prophet: "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. xxxiii, 14)

Will it be you, sensual man, who cannot now suffer the least inconvenience? Will it be you, voluptuous woman, who think of nothing but a life of ease and pleasure?

"And instead of a sweet smell, there shall be stench." (Is. iii, 24)

"Their wine is the gall of dragons." (Deut. xxxii, 33)

"While the soul lasts, the memory also will last; but what kind of memory? Foul with sins, horrible with crimes, swollen with vanity, pricked by contempt and neglect." (S. Bern.)

"According to the multitude of his devices, so also shall he suffer." (Job xx, 18)

"I will heap evils upon them, and will spend my arrows among them." (Deut. xxxii, 24)

"They are laid in hell like sheep: death shall feed upon them." (Ps. xlviii, 15)

"Employ the sword, fire, and wild beasts; still these are but shadows compared to the torments [of hell]." (S. Chrys.)

"The punishment is inflicted according to the degree of guilt; and each one of the damned in hell will be tortured by fire in proportion to the measure of his crime." (S. Greg.)

III. THE DAMNED WILL BE TORMENTED FOREVER

How great soever the pains of the damned might be, they would suffer patiently if these pains were one day to end.

"Is there any one who will think that the abyss is, as it were, drawing to an end?" (S. Greg.)

"[If so] you err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matth. xxii, 29)

"The chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matth. iii, 12)

"They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Apoc. xx, 10)

But does a sin that has lasted only a moment, deserve eternal punishment? . . . Yes, it is indeed just that a sinner who dies impenitent and with affection for sin in his soul, should be eternally punished, because as long as sin exists it deserves to be punished; but it always

exists in the will of the damned; their malice does not change, their obstinacy remains inflexible: their punishment will be eternal.

"An evil disposition is justly punished, even though the effect does not follow. When, therefore, a man dies in sin, he shows that he would always wish to sin if he had lived; therefore he ceases, not to sin, but to live." (S. Aug.)

In their despair the damned desire to be annihilated, but their desire is vain:

"They shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (Apoc. ix, 6)

"To the wretched creatures death becomes undying, the end becomes endless, the failing becomes unfailing; because death is always living, and the end is always beginning, and the failing knows not how to fail." (S. Aug.)

"O death! how sweet thou wouldst be to those to whom thou hast been so bitter! they who have always hated thee, desire thee; for they cry out: O death! come, kill us; O death! destroy us." (S. Aug.)

"Grief lasts to afflict; nature endures to suffer." (S. Aug.)

"Each crime will be measured, not by the length of time, but by the magnitude of the iniquity." (S. Aug.)

"These shall go into everlasting punishment." (Matth. xxv, 46)

"Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction." (2 Thess. i, 9)

"He will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel for ever." (Judith xvi, 21)

"A fire is kindled in My wrath, and shall burn even in the lowest hell." (Deut. xxxii, 22)

"They shall be in sorrow, and their memory shall perish." (Wis. iv, 19)

"The smoke shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste." (Is. xxxiv, 10)

"Thy sorrow is incurable: for the multitude of thy iniquity and for thy hardened sins I have done these things to thee." (Jer. xxx, 15)

"Why is my sorrow become perpetual, and my wound desperate so as to refuse to be healed?" (Jer. xv, 18)

"God spared not the angels that sinned; but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments." (2 Pet. ii, 4)

It is terrible to hear these things, but how much more terrible will it be for those who shall experience them! To suffer all and at each moment! to suffer all and for ever! in each one of his evils to feel the whole weight of eternity! This is for the damned an excess of woe that cannot be expressed.

"I am terrified by fear; I would make you secure if I became secure myself; I fear the eternal fire." (S. Aug.)

"My whole being trembles at the remembrance of that region, all my bones are out of joint." (S. Bern.)

"You fear prayers and fasting, but these are light to him who meditates on the pains of hell." (S. Bern.) For

"The pains of hell are intolerable in their rigor, endless in their eternity." (S. Bonav.)

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x, 31)

"No one who keeps hell before his eyes will fall into it; no one who despises it shall escape it." (S. Chrys.)

"Descend into hell while you live, that you may not descend into it when you die." (S. Bern.)

"He who does not wake up at the sound of this dread thunder is not asleep, he is dead." (S. Aug.)

Yes, sinners if the fear of hell does not convert you, there is nothing that can convert you.

Will you dare to say: "No man hath been known to have returned from hell?" (Wis. ii, 1)

But, ye blind! "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead." (Luke xvi, 31)

Will you dare to doubt the existence of hell? You are then an infidel, you have renounced the faith. . . . You doubt, but if you were wise, should not this doubt alone be sufficient to prevent you from exposing yourself to torments so frightful?

But perhaps you will say: I shall not be damned alone, I shall at least have the consolation of being with others. . . . Ah! poor wretch, is it thus you reason on the sad issues of this life? If you were in danger of being drowned, would it be a great consolation to you to have companions in misfortune?

"The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed." (Lam. iii, 22)

Be grateful then and do penance.

Divisions

I

The unhappy state of the damned.

1. The *past* fills them with the most bitter regrets:

1°. At the thoughts of the goods of which they have made so criminal a use;

2°. At the sight of the evils they have committed.

2. The *present* overwhelms them with a most bitter grief. They endure a two-fold pain:

1°. Separation from God,

2°. Punishment of fire.

3. The *future* fills them with the most frightful despair; for

1°. They have no longer any hope of ever obtaining any grace by their prayers;

2°. They have no longer any hope of appeasing the anger of God by penance;

3°. They have no longer any hope of paying the debt due to God's justice on account of their sins, or even of diminishing that debt by their sufferings.

II

1. The sinner in hell is separated from God: what a *loss!*

2. The sinner in hell is overwhelmed by evils of every kind: what a *punishment!*

3. The sinner in hell eternally suffers: what a *duration!*

III

1. Not to think of hell is *strange blindness* in a Christian.

2. Not to make every effort to avoid it, is the *greatest folly.*

IV

1. "Depart from Me": first pain of the damned;

2. "into fire": second pain of the damned;

3. "eternal": third pain of the damned.

XXII

PURGATORY

"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." (2 Mach. xii, 46)

The Church, seeing that we too easily forget the dead, invites us to unite our suffrages, prayers, and good works with hers, for the souls in Purgatory.

In order to excite our compassion in favor of these suffering souls, she lets us hear their sad cry:

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends." (Job xix, 21)

The custom of praying for the dead is authorized by the Holy Scriptures,—a clear proof that there is a Purgatory. We should pray for the dead; but it is not for those who are in Heaven that we should pray; neither is it for those who are in hell. Out of hell there is no redemption. It is for the souls in Purgatory that the Church asks our prayers. Let us consider: I. The motives which should induce us to assist the poor souls in Purgatory; II. The means of assisting them.

I. MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD INDUCE US TO ASSIST THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

1. The interests of God; 2. the interests of these souls; 3. our own interests.

1. *The Interests of God*

Who are they that suffer in Purgatory? They are those who have not yet done full penance for their mortal sins already forgiven and pardoned; they are those who have died in a state of venial sin. They are, therefore, just souls who suffer in Purgatory. And what do they suffer? Abode of grief, pool of fire, lay yourself open to our sight! Alas! What do I see there? What a night of frightful darkness! The interests of God urge us to assist these souls; He punishes them only with regret; in delivering them by our good works we further the inclinations of His mercy; we procure His glory, and in a certain sense, we do Him a great service.

God said to Moses: "Let Me alone, that my wrath may be kindled

against them." (Exod. xxxii, 10). He no longer speaks thus; He now asks us to place a barrier to His vengeance:

"O torments of mercy! God punishes and loves." (S. Leo.)

In God there are two kinds of glory: an essential glory (The infinite in all things can neither be increased nor diminished" William of Paris), and an accidental glory, which He may either receive or not receive. He receives this glory from creatures when they so act as to make Him better known, loved, adored. "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come." We procure this glory for Him also by assisting the souls in Purgatory.

It is of this accidental glory that the sacred writer speaks:

"Declare His glory among the gentiles, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised. . . . Give to the Lord glory to His name, bring up sacrifice, and come ye in His sight." (1 Paral. xvi, 24, 25, 29). Thus, then, the good that we do to our brethren redounds to the glory of God; we rescue them from His justice, which He exercises with regret, we restore them to His love, which He suspended with pain.

2. *The Interests of These Souls*

The interests of these souls who are separated from God, who long for Him with an ardent desire, who moreover suffer the pain of sense. Alas! they are plunged into that dark night in which they can no longer work; Heaven is deaf to their cry; like the paralytic in the Gospel, they are waiting for some helping hand to deliver them. We owe them that duty, in virtue of charity towards all, in virtue of gratitude towards some,—our benefactors, friends,—in justice towards those who are in Purgatory through our fault;—three motives of interest which nature, honor, and religion suggest to us.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job xix, 21)

"Thou tormentest me wonderfully." (Job x, 16)

"Thou art changed to be cruel towards me, and in the hardness of Thy hand Thou art against me." (Job xxx, 21)

"Fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii, 13, 15)

"Remember them that are in bonds." (Heb. xiii, 3)

"That fire of purgatory is severer than any pain that can be seen, felt, or imagined in this life." (S. Aug.)

"Every iniquity, whether great or small, must necessarily be punished, either by the sinner himself doing penance, or by God avenging." (*Id.*)

"Know that after this life those things that will have been neglected

here, shall be paid back a hundred-fold in the prison of Purgatory, even to the last farthing." (S. Bern.)

"Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing." (Matth. v, 26)

"There shall not enter into it [Heaven] anything defiled." (Apoc. xxi, 27)

And those who suffer are your relations, your friends, children of the same Church as you, and they suffer, perhaps, because of you. Husband, do you not hear the mournful cry of your faithful wife? Remember your last farewell, your last words. Young man, young woman, do you not hear the voice of the tender mother who took such care of you in your childhood, who had for you so great a love? Do you not hear the voice of that kind father who is suffering,—suffering, perhaps, because he was more anxious to form your mind according to the maxims of this world than to regulate your manners and conduct according to the law of God? Can you abandon them?

"Oh! my brethren, what bitter cruelty!" (S. Aug.)

"Who will grant me this, that Thou mayst protect me in hell?" (Job xiv, 13)

"Why do you persecute me as God, and glut yourselves with my flesh?" (Job xix, 22)

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow?" (Lam. i, 12)

"And they that passed by have not said: The blessing of the Lord be upon you." (Ps. cxxviii, 8)

They cry out to us:

"I beseech thee that I may see the face of the king." (2 Kings xiv, 32)

"Who would grant me a hearer, that the Almighty may hear my desire?" (Job xxxi, 35)

"I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none." (Ps. lxviii, 21)

"I suffer violence, answer thou for me." (Is. xxxviii, 14)

3. *Our Own Interests*

(1) Because God will treat us as we shall have treated others; (2) because the souls delivered from Purgatory by our prayers and good works, will pray for us.

(1) "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." (Matth. xxv, 40)

"In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Mark iv, 24)

(2) "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke xvi, 9)

"We have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment." (Ps. lxv, 12)

These souls will never be like that officer of Pharaoh who forgot Joseph.

"Only remember me . . . to put Pharaoh in mind to take me out of this prison. . . . But the chief butler, when things prospered with him, forgot his interpreter." (Gen. xl, 14, 23)

"May the Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead." (Ruth i, 8)

"Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy." (Jas. ii, 13)

You have forgotten the dead, you will be forgotten in your turn.

"Thy justice [shall be] in the land of forgetfulness." (Ps. lxxxvii, 13)

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that thou, O Tyre, shalt be forgotten, seventy years." (Is. xxiii, 15)

"I pray for the dead, that when they enter into eternal glory, they may not neglect to pray for me." (S. Aug.)

"Thou wicked servant, shouldst not thou have compassion on thy fellow-servant?" (Matth. xviii, 32, 33)

"If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory?" (*Imit.*, B. 3, C. 12)

"It is better now to purge away our sins and root out vices, than to reserve them to be purged hereafter." (*Imit.*, B. 1, C. 24)

"We will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful even as others who have no hope." (1 Thess. iv, 12)

"The most true custom of the Scriptures says that they are sleeping, so that when we know they are sleeping we may hope they will wake up. Whence also the Psalmist sings: "Shall he that sleepeth rise again no more?" (S. Aug.)

II. MEANS OF ASSISTING THE POOR SOULS

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; 2. Prayer, fasting, alms and other good works; 3. Indulgences that can be applied to them, and that we can gain so easily.

"He [Judas] sent twelve drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sac-

rifices to be offered for the sins of the dead." (2 Mach. xii, 43)

"The universal Church observes the tradition of the Fathers by praying in the Holy Sacrifice for those who died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and also by offering the Sacrifice for them." (S. Aug.)

S. Monica said to S. Augustine: "This only I ask of you, to remember me at the altar of the Lord."

Her prayer was heard, "when the Sacrifice was offered for her while the body was yet unburied." (S. Aug., *Confess.*)

"Beyond doubt the dead are assisted by the prayers of holy Church, by the salutary Sacrifice, and by the alms given for their souls; and God deals more mercifully with them than their sins deserve. . . . Those oblations, prayers, and alms that help the souls of the dead." (S. Aug.)

"We offer prayers for the dead on the anniversary day." (Tert.)

"We must help the dead, not by tears, but by prayers, alms, and oblations." (S. Chrys.)

"This tradition has come down from the first disciples of Christ." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"It was decreed by the Apostles that a commemoration of the dead should be made in the tremendous mysteries." (S. Chrys.)

"We believe that the souls detained in Purgatory are assisted by the suffrages of the faithful, above all by the most acceptable Sacrifice of the altar." (Council of Trent)

Forgotten soul, "who shall heal thee?" (Lam. ii, 13)

There will be a great display at the funeral, yet:

"Pomp and a grand procession to the grave may give some comfort to the living, but cannot assist the dead." (S. Aug.)

"Those who weep thus are truly to be wept over." (S. Bern.)

"Those who are lying in torments cry out daily; and there are very few who answer." (S. Bern.)

And even the heirs who possess their property, forget them.

"They drink wine in bowls, and are not concerned for the affliction of Joseph." (Amos vi, 6)

These souls lament in vain, as did Joseph. Their heirs, their brethren, are insensible.

"If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it." (1 Cor. xii, 26)

"When the dead man is at rest, let his remembrance rest, and comfort him in the departing of his spirit." (Eccli. xxxviii, 24)

"Sweet Jesus, give them eternal rest. Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them."

Divisions

I

1. Not to assist the souls in Purgatory because one is not convinced that they suffer there, nor even that there is a Purgatory, is conduct as devoid of reason as it is full of error.

2. To be convinced that the souls in Purgatory suffer, and yet not to help them, is neglect as criminal as it is opposed to affliction and humanity.

3. To desire to assist the souls in Purgatory, and for that purpose to employ only inefficacious means, is a folly as common as it is deplorable among Christians.

II

1. Truth of the doctrine of Purgatory.

2. Who are those that suffer in Purgatory? Their sufferings, the greatest of which is a deprivation of God.

3. How long shall a soul suffer in Purgatory?

4. Consolation of the souls in Purgatory; it is their love for God and the certainty that they will one day possess him.

III

1. The souls in Purgatory *can be relieved:*
(1) by the Sacrifice of the Mass;
(2) by the prayers of the faithful;
(3) by Holy Communion;
(4) by all kinds of good works, alms, etc.

2. *Motives* for relieving them:
(1) justice;
(2) charity,
(3) compassion,
(4) gratitude,
(5) our own interest.

XXIII

HEAVEN AND ETERNAL HAPPINESS

"I go to prepare a place for you." (John xiv, 2)

Heaven, which was closed when the first sin was committed in the Garden of Eden, is now open to all men. Jesus Christ went to prepare a place for us there. He invites us to follow Him. Consider: I. How great is the happiness of Heaven; II. What we must do to gain it.

"I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom." (Luke xxii, 29)

I. HOW GREAT IS THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN

The strongest desire in the heart of man is the desire for happiness. But there is no real happiness in this world.

"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." (Eccle. i, 2)

"False happiness, real misery, so much the more deserving of tears the less it is grieved over." (S. Aug.)

If you seek happiness, look for it where it is. You search for it on earth; it is not there: the riches there are perishable, the pleasures transitory, the honors false and imaginary. Look for it, but only in Heaven.

"I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear." (Ps. xvi, 15)

"Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it reposes in Thee." (S. Aug.)

"I saw in all things vanity and vexation." (Eccle. ii, 11)

"The Heart of man is of so great a dignity that the Supreme Good alone can satisfy it." (S. Aug.)

We shall find in Heaven, (1) imperishable riches, (2) everlasting pleasures, (3) real and solid honors.

1. *Imperishable Riches*

But let us take care not to form any worldly idea of the happiness of the saints, nor to extend concupiscence even into Heaven. The riches which the blessed enjoy in the house of the Lord are not of that nature; they are infinitely above those of earth.

"The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into

the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love Him." (1 Cor. ii, 9)

"What God prepares for those that love Him, is not understood by faith, is not tasted by hope, nor taken hold of by charity; it surpasses all desires." (S. Aug.)

"Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged." (Is. lx, 5)

"Good measure, and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom." (Luke vi, 38)

"We shall be filled with the good things of thy house." (Ps. lxiv, 5)

"Make to yourselves . . . a treasure in heaven which faileth not." (Luke xii, 33)

Neither the envy of men nor that of the devils shall be able to rob you of that treasure.

"There shall be no more an anathema, but Jerusalem shall sit secure." (Zach. xiv, 11)

The reason for this is that the soul shall possess God, who is the sovereign Good and the Source of every good, in so perfect a manner that it can never lose Him; it will be united to him so intimately by love and the beatific vision, that it shall become, as it were, divine.

"For when this ineffable joy has been received, the human mind, in a certain manner, disappears and becomes divine." (S. Aug.)

"Your joy no man shall take from you." (John xvi, 24)

"O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee." (Is. iii, 12)

"The things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." (2 Cor. iv, 18)

2. *Everlasting Pleasures*

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Apoc. xix, 9)

"[For] they shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv, 9)

To understand the thought of the prophet, we must remark that if all creatures together compared to God are, according to the Scriptures, only as a drop of water compared to the vast ocean, all the consolation they can give us is at most only a small part of that drop which, entering into the heart of man, leaves it as empty as it was before. But when God enters into the soul in the manner in which He will enter by His glory, it is no longer a drop, it is a flood, a torrent of delights, which enlarges, extends and elevates the heart of man infinitely beyond the limits of his nature, in order that he may be able to receive that

abundance of joy with which the Lord will take pleasure in inebriating him. "They shall be inebriated, etc." (*Ibid.*)

That which shall constitute the perfection of this happiness is that it shall be eternal. . . . Then that cry of the lovers of this world will be no longer heard: "Will this pleasure last forever?"

"They shall rejoice forever." (Ps. v, 12)

"The God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever." (Ps. lxxii, 26)

"All goods in one Good." (S. Ambr.)

3. *Real and Solid Honors*

In this life the saints are generally despised.

"[But] though in the sight of men they suffer torments, their hope is full of immortality." (Wis. iii, 4)

Sinners, you have persecuted them, but you have made them weep and suffer in this life; but God will dry their tears:

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Apoc. vii, 17)

You have censured them, calumniated them, ridiculed them; you have made them pass for fools when they mortified themselves.

"Then shall every man have praise from God." (1 Cor. iv, 5)

"Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them." (Wis. v, 1)

"Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened." (Ps. cxxxviii, 17)

"Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv, 21)

"The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii, 18)

The Queen of Sheba, astonished at the wisdom of Solomon, and at the magnificence of his house, cried out: "Thou hast exceeded thy fame with thy virtues. Happy are thy men and happy are thy servants, who stand always before thee." (2 Paralip. ix, 6). In like manner, all that can be said of Heaven falls infinitely short of what it really is.

"You shall receive a never fading crown of glory." (1 Pet. v, 4)

"The reward of the saints is so great that it cannot be measured, so abundant that it cannot be limited, so precious that it cannot be valued." (S. Ambr.)

"What could even God give better than Himself." (*Id.*)

"We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith in Him." (Tob. ii, 18)

"Only there our Lord is magnificent." (Is. xxxiii, 21)

Since Heaven is something so great, let us work zealously to merit it.

Let us not resemble those Jews who had nothing but contempt for the Land of Promise, which was a figure of the abode of the saints.

"They set at nought the desirable land." (Ps. cv, 24)

"Never cease to yearn for that which you shall possess forever." (S. Aug.)

II. WHAT WE MUST DO TO GAIN HEAVEN

1. We must merit the riches of Heaven by detachment from those of earth; 2. we must merit heavenly joy by mortifying the senses; 3. we must merit honors in Heaven by humiliations on earth.

1. *We must Merit the Riches of Heaven by Detachment from those of Earth*

Each one must deny himself. To deny ourselves is to detach ourselves from everything that would flatter the senses in this life. It is to resist the vicious inclinations and the unlawful affection which we have for things of earth, and to fix our hearts on those of Heaven, where alone our treasure is.

"A heavenly treasure must be chosen by us, that we may have our heart in it." (S. Basil)

This detachment which God demands of us in order to give us heavenly riches, is nothing else than the poverty of mind and heart of which the Gospel speaks. It is not by exterior goods that God distinguishes the poor from the rich; it is by the heart only that He judges them. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

"God questions the rich and the poor regarding their heart, not about their coffers or their houses. For what would it profit you to be destitute of riches, if you are inflamed by cupidity?" (S. Aug.)

"[Therefore] if riches abound, set not your heart upon them." (Ps. lxi, 11)

"[If thou art not wealthy] labor not to be rich, but set bounds to thy prudence." (Prov. xxiii, 4)

"Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life: lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny, and say: who is the Lord? or being compelled by poverty, I should steal and forswear the name of God." (Prov. xxx, 8, 9)

"Be not solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself." (Matth. vi, 34)

2. *We must Merit Heavenly Joys by Mortifying the Senses and Carrying our Cross Every Day*

"Let him take up his cross daily." That is to say, we must mortify our passions unceasingly, so that we may enjoy heavenly pleasures.

Carefully remark the word "daily." But let not this frighten us, the reward is worth the labor.

"We faint not; but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that which is at present momentary and light, of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 16, 17)

Meditate seriously on these words. What have the saints done?

"The saints by faith conquered kingdoms." (Heb. xi, 33)

We are not required to undergo the same ordeals, nor are we at present exposed to the persecutions of tyrants. We must, however, toil and suffer in order to share in the happiness of the saints. If we wish to reap the same harvest as they reaped, we must sow what they sowed.

"Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves." (Ps. cxxv, 6, 7)

"We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Heb. xiii, 14)

"I am straitened, . . . having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i, 23)

"If we meditate seriously on those things that are promised to us in Heaven, all the goods of this world become vile." (S. Greg.)

"No labor can seem hard, no time long, by which eternal glory is gained." (S. Jerome)

"Blessed are they that mourn. . . . Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." (Matth. v, 5, 10)

"Wo to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep. Wo to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." (Luke vi, 25)

3. *We must Merit Honors in Heaven by Humiliations on Earth*

We must follow Jesus Christ: "Let him follow Me." No one can be saved if he does not labor to render himself conformable to the divine Model of all the elect.

"Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matth. xx, 22)

What is that chalice? Reproaches, outrages, mockery, etc. "Can you drink it?" It is a question of drinking out of this chalice, of taking part in it, if you wish to gain admission into the kingdom of Heaven. Be not deceived as to this, it is on this condition only that you will reign with Jesus Christ.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matth. xi, 12)

In this world things are not ordinarily in their proper place. The just man is despised; the sinner is honored, and it is often difficult to distinguish the predestined from the reprobate. What is the place of the reprobate? It is a place of disorder, of confusion, it is hell. Judas,

instead of following Jesus Christ, betrayed Him; he followed the demon; and so

"He went to his own place." (Acts i, 25)

But the place of the predestined is in Heaven.

"His place is in peace." (Ps. lxxv, 3)

See that man addicted to vice, who everywhere leaves traces of his impure and debauched life: he is not in his place. What is the place that is due to him? It is a pool of fire.

"They shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone." (Apoc. xxi, 8)

See that miser, that deceitful man,—they are not in their place. But they shall go to it at death. "He went to his own place." (Acts i, 25)

On the other hand, see the man who is patient like Job, that poor man who was abandoned by all. He is not now in his proper place; but at death it will be said of him: "His place is in peace." (Ps. lxxv, 3)

"Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (Matth. v, 12)

[But] "he that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii, 5)

"To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne." (Apoc. iii, 21)

"Seek the things that are above." (Col. iii, 1)

"In my Father's house there are many mansions." (John xiv, 2)

"Let us hasten, therefore, to enter into that rest." (Heb. iv, 11)

Let us hasten, let us not lose time, because the night is coming when we can no longer do anything.

"I saw a great multitude whom no man could number." (Apoc. vii, 9)

It depends on ourselves alone, whether we shall be of the number of those saints.

"Enter into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. xxv, 23)

"Possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matth. xxv, 34)

"Strive to enter by the narrow gate." (Luke xiii, 24)

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matth. xix, 17)

"How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii, 1)

"One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." (Ps. xxvi, 4)

"We shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv, 16)

Divisions

I

1. The *reward of the saints* in Heaven is certain, while the *rewards of this world* are uncertain.
2. The reward of the saints is abundant, while the rewards of this world are empty and defective.
3. The reward of the saints is everlasting, while the rewards of this world wear away and perish.

II

1. The *happiness of Heaven* is infinite.
2. What must we do to merit it?

III

1. Heaven is a *kingdom,* where all imaginable riches, glory, and joys are found. "Glory and riches in His house."
2. It is a *kingdom of peace* that can never be altered by any sorrow.
3. It is *an eternal kingdom* that will never be subject to the revolutions of the earth: "His kingdom will never have an end."

We shall have a right to it only in as far as we shall have *labored* to acquire sanctity, because Heaven is a great reward.

IV

There are some who say they do not aspire to the first places, who under this pretext do nothing at all, and who think that it is sufficient to be a Christian in order to be saved. We shall undeceive them by making them see:

1. The combats and labors of our Lord;
2. The combats, labors, and penances of the saints.

V

This language: Provided I go to heaven it matters little what place I occupy there, is

1. Injurious to God;
2. Injurious to the true interests of souls;
3. A danger to salvation.

VI

The happiness of the saints consists in *seeing God,* and in *seeing themselves in God.* They see what God is in Himself; they see what God has done for them outside of Himself.

XXIV

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD IN GENERAL

"Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting? . . . If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matth. xix, 16, 17)

There is no one among you who does not desire to be saved. This desire should excite in your hearts an earnest wish, first of all to know, and then to practise, what is necessary in order to gain eternal life. You were baptized, you have the faith; but that is not enough; you must keep the commandments; you must avoid evil and do good. Faith without good works is a dead faith. Consider: I. The obligation of being instructed in the commandments; II. What we must do to fulfil that obligation.

I. THE OBLIGATION OF BEING INSTRUCTED IN THE COMMANDMENTS

1. A Christian should be able to repeat the Commandments from memory; 2. he should understand their meaning; 3. he should carry them in his heart.

1. *A Christian Should be Able to Repeat the Commandments*

God, having given us His law, commands us to be faithful to it in every particular. "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently." (Ps. cxviii, 4) He requires, therefore, that we should be instructed in them. In order to facilitate the gaining of this knowledge, and to take away every excuse for our ignorance, He has imposed on priests a rigorous duty of explaining the law: "Going, teach ye all nations." (Matth. xxviii, 19)

And yet there are found Christians who cannot repeat the Commandments from memory! How many young people, and perhaps some who are grown up, would find it difficult to recite them! Are they incapable of learning them? Ah! many among them learn sin and iniquity only too easily: oaths, blasphemies, immodest songs and discourses. They are then ignorant of this indispensable knowledge simply because they do not wish to learn the Commandments.

"Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." (Job xxi, 14)

2. *The Christian Ought to Understand the Meaning of the Commandments*

Another fault much more common is to know the commandments materially only, *i. e.,* without understanding their meaning. Yet it is easy to see that no one can comply with the law without knowing and understanding it?

"Man . . . did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. xlviii, 13)

3. *The Christian Ought to Carry the Commandments in his Heart*

We should not only know and understand the Commandments, we should also carry them in our heart, and meditate on them,—that is to say, we should often think of them, of their excellence, their wisdom, the obligations they impose, the advantages they confer; we should reflect on the happiness to be found in observing them, and convince ourselves of the necessity of being faithful to them.

"These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart." (Deut. vi, 6)

"I will give My law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart." (Jer. xxxi, 33)

It is thus St. Paul wished that the doctrine which he had taught should be written, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God.

"Ministered by us, and written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart." (2 Cor. iii, 3)

That is how a Christian should know the love of God; he should be able to repeat it from memory; he should know the meaning of it; he should carry it in his heart.

II. WHAT WE MUST DO IN ORDER TO FULFIL THIS OBLIGATION?

It is necessary to assist at catechism and instructions.

Very many people require to be instructed in the Commandments,—even many who believe themselves instructed, but who deceive themselves in several points.

Should we not, in an affair of such importance, avail ourselves of every means of instruction?

At the judgment-seat of God ignorance will not serve as an excuse. You should have received instruction, . . . you could have done so. . . .

"Who as it were on purpose have revolted from Him and would not understand His ways." (Job xxxiv, 2)

"He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. xxxv, 4)

"I did it ignorantly in unbelief," said St. Paul (1 Tim. i, 13), and nevertheless, he was not excusable, because he should have examined the doctrine of Jesus Christ carefully and without prejudice. If then a person does not know what is commanded or forbidden, because he does not study the law of God, because he does not take care to be present when that law is explained, his ignorance will not be an excuse for sin.

"That of which you are invincibly ignorant will not be imputed to you as a fault; ignorance is a fault only when you could have acquired the knowledge, but neglected to do so." (S. Aug.)

"There are those who are without knowledge not only of God, but also of themselves, so that they do not know that they have a soul." (S. Bern.)

"Later they shall be unknown to God, who have been unwilling to know God." (S. Chrys.)

"My ignorances do not remember." (Ps. xxiv, 7)

This is general obligation for all Christians, but it concerns fathers and mothers in a special manner. They are obliged to instruct their children. It is their interest also.

"The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls, . . . giving wisdom to little ones." (Ps. xviii, 8)

The same duty is incumbent on masters and mistresses; it is also their interest. . . .

God Himself is the Author of the law. Is not that a still more urgent motive for learning it well?

When, how and why did God give His law?

These Commandments were not new: they were already contained in the natural law. They are binding on all men, Christians as well as Jews. Jesus Christ has renewed them and declared that they are the foundation of the holy alliance which He came to establish. Moreover the Commandments are reduced to two, the love of God and the love of our neighbor.

"Master, which is the great commandment of the law? And Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . . This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." (Matth. xxii, 36–39)

"Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii, 10)

"He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law." (*Ibid.* 8)

Beseech the Lord to enlighten you in the way of His commandments. Say to Him often: "I am Thy servant: give me understanding that I may know Thy testimonies." (Ps. cxviii, 125)

"Give me understanding, and I will search Thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart." (*Ibid.* 34)

"Behold I have longed after Thy precepts." (*Ibid.* 40)

"I meditated also on Thy commandments which I loved." (*Ibid.* 47)

"Come ye to Him and be enlightened." (Ps. xxxiii, 6)

"Lord, give strength to do what Thou commandest, and command what Thou pleasest." (S. Aug.)

Faithfully put in practice the lessons you receive, in order that you may obtain new lights.

"Whoever wishes to understand what he hears, let him hasten to put in practice what he has already heard." (S. Greg.)

"If thou wilt keep the commandments, . . . they shall preserve thee." (Eccli. xv, 16)

XXV

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

LOVE OF GOD

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (Matth. xxii, 37)

That, said Jesus Christ, is the first and the greatest of all the Commandments. To love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole mind, is the compendium, the perfection, and the fulness of the law. God has no need of our love; it is our interest to love Him; and yet He asks for our heart. "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii, 49); and yet God is not loved. Let us consider: I. The motives of our love for God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; II. The characteristics of the love of God: "With thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."

I. THE MOTIVES OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD

The heart of man was made to love. "All things are impelled by their own weight and seek their place. My love is my weight and by it I am borne whithersoever I am borne." (S. Aug.)

But alas! man wastes his love upon objects that are unworthy of it, and refuses it to Him who alone deserves to be loved. Nevertheless, (1) God possesses all the perfections that can render an object sovereignly lovable in itself; (2) God has bestowed on us an infinite number of favors and promises us others still greater. Should we not then love Him, 1° with a love of benevolence, 2° with a love of gratitude?

1. *God Possesses all the Perfections that Can Render an Object Sovereignly Lovable in Itself*

How shall I speak to you of the perfections, of the lovability of God. The grandest idea we can form of Him is infinitely below the reality. He is great, powerful, good, holy, immense, etc., in an infinite degree. But if our minds cannot form a true idea of the

adorable perfections of God, if our tongue cannot describe these perfections, our heart can love them. And whom, then, do you love, if you do not love God? Can we refuse our love to an object so great, so good, so holy, so lovable?

"On whom the angels desire to look." (1 Pet. i, 12)

"O beauty ever ancient and ever new." (S. Aug.)

"None is good but one, that is God." (Mark x, 18)

"Why is Love not loved?" (S. Aug.)

Alas! you have daily experience of the imperfections of creatures. One is rich, but he is not virtuous; another has power, but no good will for you; this one loves you to-day, but will despise you to-morrow; that one would like to do you good, but cannot; the elegance of one pleases you for a little while, and then fills you with dislike. How great, then, is your folly in giving your heart to objects so unworthy of it? What! God alone is worthy of possessing it, and He sees in it only indifference, insensibility,—shall I say it? only contempt of His law, gross outrage committed against His infinite majesty. Again I ask, whence comes it that you do not love an object so worthy of love? Ah! it is because you do not know Him; you do not know the infinite perfections which should render Him so dear to you!

"What is His worship but love of Him?" (S. Aug.)

"I do not know whether a more magnificent recommendation can be made of love, than that made in these words: God is love; brief praise, but great;—brief in words, great in meaning." (S. Aug.)

"What should we love? That which can be with us for all eternity." (S. Aug.)

"The cause of our love of God is God Himself." (S. Bern.)

2. *God has Bestowed on Us an Infinite Number of Favors*

But perhaps you will be moved more by the benefits with which He has loaded you, and by those for which He gives you reason to hope.

If the benefits we have received or hope to receive from any one, are just motives for paying to him the tribute of our gratitude, how great should be our love for God, from whom we have received so many benefits, and hope to receive more? In order to kindle in your hearts that love of gratitude which you owe to God, is it necessary to remind you of the innumerable benefits which you have received from Him?

Gifts of nature: life, health, fortune, talents.

"We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good." (Rom. viii, 28)

Gifts of grace: not content with having created you, He has re-

deemed you from the slavery of the demon. And how? He has given you His only Son, the Sacraments, prayer.

"God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son." (John iii, 16), "When we were enemies." (Rom. v, 10)

"Let us, therefore, love God because God first hath loved us." (1 John iv, 19)

"Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God." (1 John iii, 7)

"O unconquerable power of charity! by which thou hast conquered even Him who is unconquerable, when, bound by love, God humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant! Hence that intrepid constancy of the faithful, by which, trampling punishments and death under foot, they returned to their country through the very jaws of death." (Rich. of S. Victor)

"I have loved you with an everlasting love." (Jer. xxxi, 3)

"He is very ungrateful who, being bound to return love for love, refuses to do so." (S. Aug.)

Gifts of glory . . . Heaven as reward.

"If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make our abode with him." (John xiv, 23)

"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." (1 Cor. xvi, 22)

Yes, ungrateful men, you deserve to feel the rigors of God's justice, since you are insensible to those of His love; you are surrounded on all sides by His benefits, and you refuse Him your love, which is due to Him by so many titles.

"He that loveth not abideth in death." (1 John iii, 14)

"Will a virgin forget her ornament, or a bride her stomacher? but My people hath forgotten Me days without number." (Jer. ii, 32)

And yet, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it reposes in Thee." (S. Aug.)

"Turn where you will, and as often as you will, you will find all things burdensome; in God alone is peace." (S. Aug.)

"All things tell me to love Thee; but they will speak to one who is deaf, unless Thou dost otherwise help me." (S. Aug.)

"I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength: the Lord is my firmament, my refuge, my deliverer." (Ps. xvii, 2)

"When God loves, He wishes only to be loved; indeed He loves nothing else than to be loved, knowing by love itself the blessed who have loved Him." (S. Bern.)

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOVE OF GOD

"The measure of our love for God is to love Him without measure." (S. Bern.)

Charity is not like other virtues, which may become defective as soon as they fail to keep to a certain medium. But, however great the love we may have for God, it will be always infinitely below that which He deserves, because the object of that love, being infinite, deserves an infinite love. What rule, then, can I give you for fulfilling this great commandment? You must love, (1) with your whole heart: this love should be in the heart as in its source; (2) with your whole strength; this love should be efficacious, and show itself in works.

1. *You must Love God with Your Whole Heart*

God wishes to possess our hearts: "Son, give Me thy heart, and let thy eyes keep My ways." (Prov. xxiii, 36). It is He who has formed the heart;—has He not a right to it?

In giving us this commandment, to love Him with our whole heart, what does God demand from us? He demands a love of distinction, of preference, in virtue of which this heart, esteeming God above all things, prefers Him to all else, and is disposed to lose all rather than be separated from Him.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . Neither height, nor depth, nor death, nor life, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God." (Rom. viii, 35, 39)

You will love God with a love of preference if you are ready to sacrifice all for Him, to lose your goods, your health, even your life itself, rather than be separated from Him. But if you are attached to any object which God forbids you to love, if you choose to offend Him rather than deprive yourself of this pleasure, or suffer this insult, this contempt, you do not love God, because love should banish from your heart everything that could deprive Him of its possession. God wants to possess your heart, and to possess it wholly: "with your whole heart." He will not allow any division of it. Yet He does not forbid us to love His creatures, to love our parents, our relatives. He even commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; but this love should have reference to God, who ought to be the motive of it.

"He loves Thee less who shares his love between Thee and something which he does not love for Thy sake." (S. Aug.)

"You command me to love You, O Lord God: this I can and ought to do." (S. Cypr.)

What are, then, the objects which God forbids you to love? They are those the love of which is incompatible with that which you owe to Him: those objects of a blind passion that are for you an occasion of sin; those persons with whom you maintain criminal intimacies . . . This love which you owe to God should be as strong as death, that is to say, just as death separates the soul from the body, so the love of God should separate us from forbidden objects.

"Love is strong as death, jealousy is hard as hell. . . . Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it." (Cant. viii, 6, 7)

"He who loves anything else, cannot love God; his soul is already occupied." (S. Aug.)

"As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the love of God will be reputed dead." (S. Aug.)

2. *You Must Love God with Your Whole Strength*

True love of God does not consist in the sentiments we may have regarding His perfections, nor in the words we speak. This love is manifested by works alone.

"Let us love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John iii, 18)

This is the mark by which Jesus Christ recognizes those who love Him; it is by keeping the Commandments that true love is shown.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John xiv, 21)

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." (*Ibid.* 15)

"They that love Him [the Lord] will keep His way." (Eccli. ii, 18)

"If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it for nothing." (Cant. viii, 7)

"If any one love Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." (John xiv, 23)

"If I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii, 1)

"A brief commandment is given to you: Love, and do what you will." (S. Aug.)

"Nothing seems hard, no labor difficult, to those who love God; let us also love God and all will seem easy." (S. Jerome)

"The love of God is never idle; it engages in great works if it exists; if it refuses to work, there is no love." (S. Greg.)

In reality, if friendship consists in conformity of will, we cannot love God without doing His will.

"He who saith that he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John ii, 4)

Do you, then, wish to know who is the man that really loves God, and whether this love reigns in your hearts also? The man who loves God is the man who fears nothing so much as to displease Him, who fulfils his duty to his Creator each day by adoration, prayer, and other religious exercises; who never takes the name of the Lord in vain, and who employs in His service the Sundays and holydays of obligation; who gives to each one what belongs to him; who freely pardons injuries,—in a word, the man who observes all the Commandments and practises all the virtues, really loves God, because "love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii, 10). There is no exception to this rule.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (Jas. ii, 10)

"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matth. x, 37)

"Their heart is divided, now they shall perish." (Os. x, 2)

"No man can serve two masters." (Matth. vi, 24)

"Say not to me: I love God even more than myself; these are words; show your love by your works. If you love Him more than yourself, love Him more than money; and then I will believe that you love Him more than yourself. But as you do not despise money for God's sake, how can you despise yourself for His sake?" (S. Chrys.)

He who keeps the Commandments, proves that he loves God. But we must remark that charity has its own special object, which is God, considered in His infinite perfection; that is to say, that in virtue of the first Commandment we are obliged to love God, not only because of what He does for us, but also because of what He is in Himself.

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and do penance, and do the first works." (Apoc. ii, 4, 5)

"This only take care of with all diligence, that you love the Lord your God." (Jos. xxiii, 11)

"Love God all thy life, and call upon Him for thy salvation." (Eccli. xiii, 18)

What are the *marks* by which we can know whether this love of God reigns in our hearts? If we love to speak of Him and to hear Him spoken of; to visit Him often in the church and in the persons of the poor; if we are careful not to do anything that would displease Him; if we have a great horror of sin; if we strive to fulfil His holy will in all things, to procure His glory as much as we can, and to prevent others from offending Him.

"Charity covereth all sins." (Prov. x, 12)
"I love them that love Me." (Prov. viii, 17)
"The eyes of God are upon them that love Him." (Eccli. xxxiv, 15)
"The Lord keepeth all them that love Him." (Ps. cxliv, 20)
"O fire that always burns and is never extinguished, O love that always consumes and never grows cold, inflame me, and I shall be inflamed; inflame me, I say, and my whole being shall love Thee alone." (S. Aug.)
"Too late have I loved Thee, O Goodness ever ancient and ever new, too late have I known Thee." (S. Aug.)
"What am I to Thee that Thou shouldst command me to love Thee, and unless I do this, Thou art angry with me, and dost threaten me with great afflictions? Woe is me! is the affliction of not loving Thee a small thing? True love feels not bitterness, but sweetness. He who loves does not consider the labor, and if there is labor, it is loved." (S. Aug.)
"Receive my remaining years." (S. Bern.)

Divisions

I

1. All things tell us that nothing deserves our love more than God, our Creator, Redeemer, Rewarder. Consider;
(1) what He has done for us in the order of nature;
(2) what He has done for us in the order of grace;
(3) what He will one day do for us in the order of glory.
What motives for giving Him our hearts!

2. Three *principal marks* of *divine love* which include all the others:
1°. to love God above all things;
2°. to obey Him in all important matters;
3°. to be faithful to Him even in small things.
Love of distinction, love of obedience, love of fidelity.

II

Three things that should induce us to love God:
1. His divine perfections,
2. His benefits,
3. His love.

Reasons why we do not love God:

1. Our blindness.
2. Our ingratitude.

III

1. *Nothing is more just than to love God:*
1°. because it is an act of justice to give our whole heart to Him who deserves it;
2°. because God has a right to our love as our Creator, our Benefactor, our Preserver;
3°. because He has first loved us, and with a greater love.

2. *Nothing is more advantageous than to love Him:*
1°. because charity constitutes all our merit and glory before God, the measure of God's love for us, the source of our happiness on earth and in Heaven;
2°. because our perfection and our sanctity consist in our love for God;
3°. because the measure of our charity on earth will be the measure of our glory in Heaven. "We must love God for His own sake and for our advantage." (S. Bern.)

IV

1. How Jesus loves.
2. How Jesus wishes to be loved.

V

1. We ought to love Jesus Christ.
2. There is nothing stronger, nothing sweeter nor easier than to love Him.

VI

God possesses all that is necessary to captivate our love:
1. He is a Being of infinite beauty.
2. He is infinite goodness.

XXVI

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Luke x, 27)

In the Parable of the Samaritan (Luke x, 30 ff.) Christ shows us an example of the love which we should have for our neighbor. "Go and do thou in like manner" (v, 37). But, alas! what precept is less observed among us to-day! That beautiful fire which Christ came to kindle on earth, is almost entirely extinguished by hatred and revenge. May I hope to rekindle it in your hearts by making you see: I. The obligation of loving our neighbor: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor"; II. How we must love him: "As thyself."

I. THE OBLIGATION OF LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

The law commanding us to love our neighbor, that is to say, all mankind, is as old as the world. Christ renewed it and made it perfect. That is why He places it in the rank of the first principles of His Gospel, and calls it His Commandment.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another." (John xv, 12)

"A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you." (John xiii, 34)

We should love our neighbor, (1) because of his relations with God, (2) because of his relations with us.

1. *We Should Love our Neighbor because of his Relations with God*

He is the work and the image of God; he has been redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

"Let us make man to Our image and likeness." (Gen. i, 26)

To refuse to love our neighbor is to refuse to love God, whose image he is, and to whom he belongs.

"He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not." (1 John iv, 20)

There is no salvation for those who do not love their neighbor, since they transgress one of the greatest Commandments, and since it

is by the observance of His Commandments that God knows those who love Him. In vain would you speak with the tongues of angels, in vain would you pass your days in prayer, in vain would you deliver your body to the most rigorous fasts . . .

"If I have not charity it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii, 3)

"He that loveth not, abideth in death." (1 John iii, 14)

"Before all things have a constant charity among yourselves." (1 Pet. iv, 8)

And say not that this man, this person whom you do not love, does not deserve your love, that he is subject to faults that render him unworthy of your friendship;—that no one could live with him;—that he has offended, insulted you, and harbors bad feelings towards you. All that may be true, but that man is not less the image of God; he is not less purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. That is what you should see in him. It is not because of his faults or vices that you are commanded to love him; it is the image of God, it is God Himself you must consider, and you must close your eyes to all else.

"If God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John iv, 11)

"He who loves God cannot despise Him when God commands him to love his neighbor; and he who loves his neighbor with a holy and spiritual love, what does he love in him but God Himself?" (S. Aug.)

"The countenance and image of Christ, by which we are known to be His, is engraved in us, it is the glory of charity." (S. Cyril)

2. We should Love our Neighbor because of his Relations Towards Us

We can consider man, (a) as he is in himself, (b) as a Christian.

(a) As he is in himself. We have all the same origin; we have all the same nature; we dwell on the same earth.

"Each man is a neighbor to every other man; long descent must not be thought of where the nature is common." (S. Aug.)

"He is to be considered a neighbor not because of blood-relationship, but because of community of nature." (*Id.*)

"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother?" (Malach. ii, 10)

Do not think then that because you are rich and your neighbor is poor, you are not bound to love him. This man, poor and miserable though he may be, is a man as you, he is your fellow-creature; God could make him as rich as you are. See yourself then in that man whom you despise. . . . "Attend to thyself." (S. Aug.)

"This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." (1 John iv, 21)

(b) In his quality as a Christian. We are all brethren in Jesus Christ, and the bond formed among men by Christianity is stronger even than that formed by nature. As Christians we have all been regenerated by the same baptism, we are nourished by the same Sacraments.

"You are the body of Christ, and members of member." (1 Cor. xii, 27)

"We being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. xii, 5)

Poor and rich, all belong to the same mystical body of Christ, consequently all should be united by the closest bond of charity.

Therefore, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi, 2)

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii, 9)

"In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren." (1 John iii, 16)

And yet, where shall we find this Christian charity, which ought to be the bond uniting hearts? Among many Christians we see only enmities, divisions, jealousies, injustice. . . . It can be said that, among creatures, man finds no more cruel enemy than his fellow-man. Fidelity among friends no longer exists. No one knows, it is said, whom to trust. Even those who are most closely related by ties of blood are sometimes the greatest enemies. You will often see those who make profession of piety giving way to hatred, dislike, and ill-will. O charity of the early Christians—why do you not reign in the hearts of the Christians of to-day!

"One loves because he is loved in return, another because he is honored, and again another because he thinks a man will be useful to him; you will have difficulty in finding any one who loves his friend for the sake of Jesus Christ: almost all are influenced by worldly interests." (S. Chrys.)

"Such is the blessing of the peace which springs from mutual charity, that among created things nothing more delightful can be desired, nothing more useful possessed." (S. Lawr. Just.)

II. HOW WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

1. With a sincere love, which exists in the heart, and which is opposed to those seeming friendships that have no reality; 2. with an efficacious love, which is shown in works, and is opposed to those

empty friendships that are without effect; 3. with a pure and disinterested love.

1. *With a Sincere Love*

We ought to love our neighbor with a love like to that which we have for ourselves. But as the love which we have for ourselves is not always well regulated, as it is not always animated by a good motive, as it is often vicious, Jesus Christ wished to purify our love for our neighbor, by proposing to us as a model the love He has for us: "As I have loved you."

We love ourselves with a sincere love, and it can be said that on this point we are not likely to conceal it; we not only do not wish evil to ourselves, but we desire for ourselves those things that are necessary, useful, or agreeable.

"Consider how much love you have for yourself, and have as much for your neighbor." (S. Aug.)

"Do not do to another what you would not wish to be done to you; . . . all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." (Matth. vii, 12)

"To love one's neighbor as oneself, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices." (Mark xii, 33)

Because you love yourself, you do not wish that your property should be stolen, that your character should be injured, or yourself insulted. If you are in sorrow or trouble, you are pleased when others visit and sympathize with you. You wish others to have patience with your faults or defects. "Go thou and do in like manner."

Alas! how rare is that charity which suffers all, which forgives all, which desires good to all! . . . People believe that they fulfil this obligation of charity by some signs of friendship which they show towards their neighbor; but under those visible signs there is no sincere and solid love. Do you desire proof of this? Let the neighbor meet with some trouble or misfortune, and people feel a malicious joy. Let him prosper, and they are grieved, while outwardly they seem to rejoice. Is that loving our neighbor as ourselves? Is that the love the first Christians had for one another?

"See [the pagans said] how they love one another, and are ready to die for one another." (Tert.)

Why? "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." (Acts iv, 32)

"The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith." (1 Tim. i, 5)

"Before all things, have a constant mutual charity among your-

selves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. iv, 8)

"Charity, which is founded on the love of Jesus Christ, is firm, enduring, and invincible; it is not destroyed by anything, neither by detractions, nor dangers, nor death." (S. Chrys.)

2. *With an Efficacious Love*

When charity exists in the heart, it is shown in the effects it produces.

"Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John iii, 18)

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." What is the love which we have for ourselves? We not only desire prosperity for ourselves, but we take the measures necessary to procure it, and to find comfort in our needs. Are we in want, or sick? The love we have for ourselves causes us to use every effort to find what is necessary for us. A sincere and efficacious love ought to make us act in like manner towards our neighbor. Remember the good Samaritan. "Go thou and do in like manner."

To come to the practice of charity, we must study all the necessities of body and soul from which our neighbor suffers, in order to give him all the help we can. Is your brother in want? Give him a helping hand. Is he hungry? Give him food. Is he chained to his bed by sickness? Visit him, comfort him. In a word, give to your neighbor who is in need, all the services you would be pleased to receive from others.

"Our love is proved by what we do." (S. Greg.)

"He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John iii, 17)

"If a brother or sister be naked, . . . and you give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" (Jas. ii, 15, 16)

"Let every one of you please his neighbor unto good, to edification." (Rom. xv, 2)

But alas! the spirit of selfishness renders men insensible to the sufferings of their neighbors. It is this spirit of selfishness which separates those who should be most united, which separates friends and relatives, and disturbs all society.

"All seek the things that are their own" (Phil. ii, 21), whereas "Charity seeketh not her own." (1 Cor. xiii, 5)

"Who is weak, and I am not weak?" (2 Cor. xi, 29)

In order, then, to be truly charitable, we ought to cast aside that

spirit of selfishness, and share our goods with others, according to their needs and our means.

"Be not wanting in comforting them that weep, and walk with them that mourn. Be not slow to visit the sick: for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love." (Eccli. vii, 38, 39)

The greatest charity we can show towards our neighbor is to help him to save his soul. If your neighbor is in sorrow, console him. If he is ignorant or leading a disorderly life, instruct him, correct him. If you saw a beast of burden fall into a ditch, you would lift it out through friendship for its owner; but you see your brother led to the precipice by his sins and you make no effort to draw him back! Where is your charity? Where is your zeal for the glory of God? But what would it be if by your evil counsel, your bad example, you hastened his fall?

"He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor." (Eccli. xvii, 12)

"Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ hath died?" (1 Cor. viii, 11)

3. *With a Pure and Disinterested Love*

It will be such if we love our neighbor as Christ loved us.

"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (Ephes. v, 2)

But Christ has loved us without any merit on our part, without any self-interest on His. If you have a particular affection for any one because of relationship, or of benefits received, that affection should be referred to God as to its first object. Charity should be supernatural, and consequently unselfish. It will be such, if you love your neighbor notwithstanding his reverse of fortune, his disgrace, his faults, the wrongs he may have done to you.

"Love of our neighbor is produced by our love of God, and our love of God is strengthened by love of our neighbor." (S. Greg.)

"This is clearly the office of charity, to love all men for God's sake. If, however, you love one man and do not love another, this is friendship for man's sake; but ours is not of that kind." (S. Chrys.)

Ah! how little unselfish charity we find! We love those who are in good repute, because of certain advantages we expect from them; we love those who are prosperous and able to do good to us. But when we find we have no longer anything to expect, as soon as fortune has changed, friendship ends: a clear proof that God is not the beginning and the end of that love.

"Fulfil ye my joy, that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment." (Phil. ii, 2)

"He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. . . . The love of

our neighbor worketh no evil. Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii, 8, 10)

"Let us love one another, for charity is of God." (1 John iv, 7)

"If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (1 John iv, 20)

"Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up," etc. (1 Cor. xiii, 4)

"Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if you have a complaint against another." "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. iii, 12, 14).

Divisions

I

1. *Motives which induce us to love our neighbor:*

1°. He, like us, is a child of the same, Father, God;

2°. like us, he is a child of the same mother, the Church;

3°. like us, he is a member of the same Head, Jesus Christ, and of the same body, the Church.

2. *Rules for that love.*

1°. We must love our neighbor just as we wish to be loved by him;

2°. we must love him as we love ourselves;

3°. we must love him as Christ has loved us.

II

1. We should love our neighbor:

1°. Because God commands it;

2°. because he is made to the image of God, is purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, loved by God, destined for the same end as we; he is united to us by the bonds of the same faith and the same religion, and by participation in the same Sacraments.

2. The *duties of charity* consist,

1°. In not doing any injury to our neighbor;

2°. in desiring and procuring for him all the good we can, in forwarding his interests, rejoicing with him, consoling him in his sorrow, and exercising towards him all the works of mercy.

III

Our love for our neighbor ought to be,

1. supernatural in its beginning, and have in view his eternal salvation;

2. universal, that is, it should include all men without distinction;

3. constant and lasting: we should never cease loving him, no matter what cause we may think we have for not doing so.

XXVII

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

THE ADORATION DUE TO GOD

"Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me." (Exod. xx, 3)

The first Commandment has reference to the honor, the worship, and the love that are due to God. It is expressed in these words: "One God only thou shalt adore." By these words we are commanded to adore God and to love Him with our whole heart; adoration being the submission of the heart, it follows that we really adore God only when we love Him. He who truly adores is He who loves. But as I have already spoken to you of the love of God, it will suffice to speak to you to-day of the adoration due to Him. I. The adoration which is due to God; II. The sins that are opposed to it.

I. THE ADORATION WHICH IS DUE TO GOD

1. To adore God is to give Him the worship, the honor, and the respect we owe to Him as our Creator and Sovereign Master. It is to acknowledge and profess our entire dependence on and submission to Him.

Is there anything more meet? Has not God given us existence and life? Does He not each moment preserve them for us? Is it not He who has redeemed us? Should we not then bless Him, praise Him, and thank Him?

"He made us and not we ourselves." (Ps. xcix, 3)

Another motive is that God demands this worship from us. It is not that He has need of our homage, but He cannot renounce the glory which His creatures should give to Him. He cannot dispense them from this duty.

"It is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matth. iv, 10)

2. *How must we give to God this homage of adoration?* Man, being composed of a body and a soul, and having received both from God, ought to employ them in discharging his duties toward God. Hence exterior and interior worship.

Exterior worship consists in genuflexions, the sign of the cross, vocal prayers, etc. It has been always regarded as an indispensable duty which man owes to God; because our body belongs to Him as well as our soul; because the movements and the posture of the body excite in the soul the feelings it should have for God; because, being destined to live together in society, we ought to give mutual edification by the exercises of exterior and public worship.

"Come let us adore, and fall down before the Lord." (Ps. xciv, 6).

"Unto Thee I have lifted up my eyes; O Thou, who dwellest in heaven." (Ps. cxxii, 1)

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol His name together." (Ps. xxxiii, 4)

Interior worship. Exterior worship cannot please God without interior worship. When our exterior practices of piety are accompanied by a lively faith and a sincere love; when, professing with the lips that we adore God, we are sincerely disposed to obey Him in all things, then, and then only, does God look with love on our adoration. But if, when giving Him exterior signs of worship and adoration, we carry to the foot of the altar a mind full of worldly folly and a heart full of sin, God rejects our homage.

"The true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him." (John iv, 23)

"This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matth. xv, 8)

"This people draw near Me with their mouth and with their lips glorifying Me, but their heart is far from Me." (Is. xxix, 13)

"My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Ps. lxxxiii, 3)

Man is content with receiving exterior marks of respect, because he cannot know the movements of the soul, the dispositions of the heart. "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings, xvi, 7)

How do people fulfil this command to adore God? How do they enter the church? How do they conduct themselves there? Would they show so little humility, so little respect, in presenting themselves before the throne of a secular ruler?

And as to the interior adoration! They pray, but without reflection, without thinking of what they say, without understanding what they ask from God.

"[They are] become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii, 1)

"They loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue lied unto Him." (Ps. lxxvii, 36)

[Therefore] "My soul hateth your solemnities. . . . I am weary of bearing them." (Is. i, 14)

3. *When must we make these acts of adoration?* We are obliged to make them as soon as we come to the use of reason. Fervent Christians perform this duty regularly, morning and evening, and often during the day. They hear Mass on week days when the duties of their state of life permit them to do so.

But, alas! how many there are who habitually betake themselves to their daily occupations without having first thought of God, without having made even the sign of the cross! How many who pass days, weeks, nay, entire months without raising their hearts to their Sovereign Lord. Let it not be so with us.

Sundays and holydays are days on which we are specially called upon to fulfil this obligation.

II. SINS OPPOSED TO THE SUPREME WORSHIP WHICH IS DUE TO GOD, OR TO THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION

1. *Idolatry*

Idolatry is committed by giving to a creature the homage which is due to the Sovereign Majesty of God alone . . . worship of pagans . . . adoration of idols.

Man renders himself guilty of a kind of idolatry when, in order to follow the sinful inclinations of his heart, he refuses to adore God. "I am not a pagan," he may perhaps say, "I do not adore an idol." But those shameful passions to which you give yourself up, those sins to which you are sacrificing your eternal salvation, those creatures to which you are attached,—are they not so many idols?

"Whoever sins, commits idolatry." (Tert.)

"Covetousness, which is the service of idols." (Col. iii, 5)

"Enemies of the cross of Christ, . . . whose god is their belly." (Phil. iii, 18)

"The unclean . . . worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." (Rom. i, 25)

To serve God and at the same time to serve the world, that is, to follow its maxims, to take part in its pomps and sinful pleasures, to pretend to live according to the law of God while in reality following the customs of a corrupt world, is to be inconsistent, is a thing that God will not tolerate.

"How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." (3 Kings xviii, 21)

"Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God." (2 Cor. vi, 14–16)

"No man can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matth. vi, 24)

"You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. x, 21)

"Now, therefore, put away strange gods from among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord the God of Israel." (Jos. xxiv, 23)

2. *Witchcraft*

This is the crime of those who, by an express or tacit agreement with the devil, or even without such an agreement, desire by his means to know the future, or hidden things, or to satisfy their passion of avarice, revenge, lust, etc.

"I would not that you should be made partakers with devils." (1 Cor. x, 20)

It is of faith that there have been magicians; but the reign of the demon having been destroyed by Jesus Christ, and his power considerably weakened, they are now much fewer than is thought.

We must be careful not to believe lightly that such or such persons practise witchcraft and set charms. Instead of fearing such things, have a great confidence in God; He takes special care of those who love Him.

"The Lord keepeth all them that love Him." (Ps. cxliv, 20)

"If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii, 31)

3. *Impiety*

A man becomes guilty of impiety when he treats religion with contempt; and this sin, great in itself, becomes much greater when the contempt is manifested in speech and conduct. Be very careful not to listen to the impious, avoid their society if you do not wish to incur the risk of being enveloped in the malediction that awaits them.

4. *Superstition*

By superstition we generally mean vain observances and dangerous practices. A man is guilty of this sin when he attributes to certain

practices or to certain prayers a power which God has not attached to them, which the Church has not recognized in them. There are things which from their nature have relation to the effect that is expected, and which are fit to produce that effect. Certain herbs can cure certain kinds of sickness. But to make use of objects, signs, or words that evidently have not the power attributed to them, and to expect a certain effect from them, is to expect that effect from the devil.

It is superstition to desire to know the future and hidden things, a knowledge of which cannot be got by human means. The knowledge of events that depend on the free acts of man belongs to God alone.

"Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods." (Is. xli, 23)

"Go not aside after wizards, nor ask anything of sorcerers, to be defiled by them." (Levit. xix, 31)

Do you wish to know the future? There are some things which you can know with certainty.

"Those who have done good will go into eternal life; but those who have done evil into everlasting fire." (Athanasian Creed)

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (Job xxi, 13)

"When they shall say, peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them." (1 Thess. v, 3)

"Know ye this and understand that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ephes. v, 5)

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3)

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

The observing of signs and dreams is another very common superstition.

"You shall not divine nor observe dreams." (Levit. xix, 26)

"Give no heed to your dreams." (Jer. xxix, 8)

"Dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them." (Eccli. xxxiv, 7)

"Thou hast hated them that regard vanities." (Ps. xxx, 7)

"You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps, I have labored in vain among you." (Gal. iv, 10, 11)

"Be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear; for the laws of people are vain." (Jer. x, 2, 3)

Avoid superstition, but avoid also the unbelievers, who treat as superstitions the dogmas and ceremonies of religion.

5. *Sacrilege*

The first commandment also forbids all *profanation of holy things,* —all sacrilege. By these sacred things, the profaning of which is sacrilege, we understand especially the Sacraments, the word of God, the ceremonies of the Church, everything that serves for the worship of God, as images, ornaments, sacred vessels.

Profanation of holy places, . . . treating injuriously persons consecrated to God.

"They polluted My sanctuary." (Ezech. xxiii, 38)

"If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." (1 Cor. iii, 17)

"Give honor to the priests." (Eccli. vii, 33)

"He that despises you, despises Me." (Luke x, 16)

XXVIII

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

THE WORSHIP OF THE SAINTS, OF IMAGES, AND OF RELICS

"Thou shalt not have strange gods." (Exod. xx, 3)

We are commanded by the first Commandment to adore God alone. Are we forbidden to honor the saints, their images, and their relics? Evidently not. I am going to explain to you what the Catholic Church teaches, and what you ought to know, regarding the worship and the honor given to the saints, to images, and to relics. I. In what does this worship given to the saints, to their images and relics consist? II. The benefit and fruit which can and ought to be drawn from this worship; III. Errors to be avoided.

I. IN WHAT DOES THIS WORSHIP CONSIST?

1. The Church does not give to the saints the same worship that she gives to God; she *honors them only as the friends of God.* There is, therefore, no idolatry in this worship.

The veneration of the saints, has been practised at all times.

"Josue fell on his face to the ground, and worshipping said: What saith my Lord to his servant?" (Jos. v, 15)

The worship given to the saints does not diminish that given to God, because all the honor given to them is ultimately referred to Him. We honor the gifts of God in the saints.

"We honor the relics of the martyrs in order to adore Him whose martyrs they are. We honor the servants, that the honor given to them may redound to the honor of the Lord." (S. Jerome)

God approves of the honor given to His friends; He is pleased to manifest their holiness by striking miracles worked in favor of those who honor them.

"Thy friends, O God, are exceedingly honorable." (Ps. cxxxviii, 17)

"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." (Matth. xxv, 40)

"If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honor." (John xii, 26)

"You are My friends if you do the things that I command you." (John xv, 14)

Finally, it is the Church, always guided by the Holy Ghost, that teaches us to give this honor to those of her children whom God has glorified. And who can know better than she what contributes to or takes from the glory of God?

2. The Church teaches us to *honor the images of the saints*: yet we do not believe that they have of themselves anything that should cause us to honor them. We honor them in the memory of Jesus Christ and of the saints, and because the honor we give them is referred to the objects they represent.

"The honor shown to them is referred to the originals represented by them." (Council of Trent, Sess. 25)

"Helena adored the King, not the wood." (S. Ambr.)

Crosses, miraculous images, have not of themselves any virtue. They are, however, preserved with more respect because, besides representing Jesus Christ or the saints, they serve as memorials of the goodness and almighty power of God. Thus, one of the reasons why it may be more advantageous to pray before a miraculous image than before one not miraculous, is that in recalling to mind the graces which God has granted in such a place, we are induced to pray with more fervor and confidence, and in so doing, more easily obtain what we ask.

3. Among other relics we should pay a special veneration to the holy bodies of the martyrs and others who reign with Jesus Christ, who on earth were His living members, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and whom He will one day raise up from the dead and glorify for all eternity. (Council of Trent, Sess. 25). Through them God grants many favors to men. The Church has always rendered this worship to the relics of the saints; God himself has authorized it by many miracles.

The mantle of Elias divided the waters of the Jordan. (4 Kings, ii, 8)

The bones of Eliseus restored a dead man to life. (*Ibid.* xiii, 21)

Articles that had touched the body of S. Paul cured the sick and delivered those possessed of the devil. (Acts xix, 12)

Ecclesiastical history relates a great number of similar facts.

"Your bones shall flourish like an herb." (Is. lvi, 14)

"The Lord keepeth all their bones: not one of them shall be broken." (Ps. xxxiii, 21)

II. THE BENEFIT AND FRUIT WHICH CAN AND OUGHT TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS WORSHIP

We honor the saints, their images and their relics, because they are the friends of God, because they can help us by their protection.

We venerate the images of the saints; we place them in our churches, in order that by means of these images the faithful may know, and more readily call to mind, the gifts and benefits they have received from Jesus Christ. In doing this we, in a certain sense, place before the eyes of Christians the miracles God has worked by His saints, as well as their salutary example, so that they may give thanks to the Lord, may imitate these models, and may be moved to adore and love God, the Author of all holiness.

"You are My friends." (John xv, 14)

"Secure in their destiny they are anxious for our salvation." (S. Cypr.)

"Go to My servant, Job, . . . and My servant, Job, will pray for you." (Job xlii, 8)

The Angel Raphaël said to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tob. xii, 12)

"Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount." (Exod. xxv, 40)

"That we may rejoice in the merits of those by whose example we are taught." (Eccl. Office)

"Can you not do what these have done?" (S. Aug.)

Paintings are placed in the churches in order that the illiterate, who cannot read what is written in books, may at least read it by seeing it on the walls." (S. Greg.)

"To worship the saints is to our advantage, not theirs." (S. Bern.)

III. ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED

If the worship which is given to the saints is not regulated by the teaching of the Church, it is defective, and is not pleasing to the saints to whom it is given, because it is not referred to God, and does not contribute to His honor and glory.

It is an error to direct all our devotion towards a saint at a time when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed or carried in procession; or to be scrupulous about working on the feast of a saint, while feeling no scruple in the profanation of the Sunday; or to believe that it is from the saints themselves we obtain what we ask through their intercession; or to refer our worship to the image, the statue, the relic itself without directing it to the saint whom these things represent.

We sin through want of veneration when we treat images, relics,

without respect, without devotion, without trying to enter into the feelings that cause them to be exposed in the churches.

Have these memorials of piety in your houses; the house of a Christian should be distinguished from that of a pagan. Do not have indecent pictures. Understand clearly what the teaching of the Church is regarding the worship of the saints.

Adoration is to be given to God alone; prayers of intercession only are to be addressed to the saints, as to creatures. The veneration given to the saints should be referred ultimately to God. Let us take special care to be urged on in the work of our sanctification by the images and the example of the saints.

"The life of the saints is the model for others." (S. Ambr.)

XXIX

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

OATHS AND VOWS

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." (Exod. xx, 7)

The second Commandment forbids us to profane the adorable name of God by unnecessary or sinful oaths. This gives rise to three questions: I. What is an oath? II. What conditions should accompany an oath? III. What obligation does one contract by an oath, and when can one be dispensed from this obligation?

I. WHAT IS AN OATH?

To swear or to take an oath is to call on God to witness the truth of what we say. We can call on God as a witness in many ways: explicitly, as: God is my witness; implicitly, through certain creatures in which the divine perfections shine forth in a striking manner, by words, by signs, in touching the holy Gospels, in raising the hand.

An oath is allowed and, whenever accompanied by the required conditions, is an act of religion by which God is honored.

"Thou shalt swear by His [God's] name." (Deut. vi, 13)

It is authorized by the example of the saints:

"As the Lord liveth." (3 Kings i, 29)

"As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth." (4 Kings ii, 2)

"So do God to me, and add more, if thou be not the chief captain of the army before me always in the place of Joab." (2 Kings xix, 13)

"Didst not thou, my Lord, O King [David], swear to me thy handmaid, saying: Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit in my throne?" (3 Kings i, 13)

"Now the things which I write to you; behold before God, I lie not." (Gal. i, 20)

The Lord bound Himself by oaths:

"The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent." (Ps. cix, 4)

"The Lord of armies hath sworn by Himself." (Jer. li, 14)

"All they shall be praised that swear by Him." (Ps. lxii, 12)

"An oath is for confirmation." (Heb. vi, 16)

II. CONDITIONS OF AN OATH

"Thou shalt swear: As the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice." (Jer. iv, 2)

"It must be remembered that an oath should have these companions, (1) truth (2) judgment, and (3) justice." (S. Jerome)

1. *Truth.* That is to say, we must be certain that the thing is as we state it on oath; we must have the intention of really doing what we promise. Without this condition the oath is called perjury, and is always a mortal sin.

"That perjury is a sin, and a great sin, no one doubts. It is a very grave sin to swear falsely." (S. Aug.)

It inflicts a great injury on God, even though the subject matter of the oath or promise be of little consequence. It is in reality a great outrage on God and on His holy name, to call on Him to confirm a lie. What would be thought of a servant who would say to his master: "I wish to deceive some one, but I cannot do it by myself; permit me to use your credit, your authority, your name, in order to accomplish my purpose."

But when a man swears falsely in a light matter, when he proposes to render a service to his neighbor, when he is threatened with great evils, is it always a mortal sin? Yes; all these circumstances can diminish the gravity of the sin, but they cannot prevent its being mortal.

"God is not mocked." (Gal. vi, 7)

Perjury is then an outrage against the adorable name of God. This consideration alone should suffice to make us fear perjury; to this add the thought of the chastisements with which God threatens to punish it.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain." (Exod. xx, 7)

"The curse . . . shall come to the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." (Zach. v, 4)

Why does not this curse fall on the person of the perjurer only, why does it fall on his house also? It is, says St. Chrysostom, in order that all may learn, at the sight of such terrible punishment, to amend their lives, or never to fall into similar crimes. And do not imagine that there have not been examples of this striking punishment.

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth, . . . a deceitful witness." (Prov. vi, 16, 19)

Sedecias perjured himself; his children were massacred; . . . he himself was deprived of sight. (Jer. xxxiv, lii)

"He who lightly values an oath, deceives Him by whom he swears, and does an injury to Him in whose name the opponent believes." (S. Jerome)

2. *Judgment.* That is to say, we must not swear lightly or without necessity, and we must understand what our oath is about.

"Holy and terrible is His name." (Ps. cx, 9)

We must not, then, use that dread name in vain! We must not invoke it in frivolous matters or when we have other means of gaining belief in our word.

"He shall not be unpunished that taketh His name upon a vain thing." (Deut. v, 11)

The first Christians, penetrated with profound respect for the oath, took it with the greatest circumspection. As for me, says S. Augustine, I take an oath, but only when I am forced to do so; and then, after mature consideration, I say with respect and fear: "I speak to you in the presence of God," or "Jesus Christ knows that I speak sincerely." And yet how do many among us act in this matter? With what scandalous facility they swear! There is hardly anything else heard among workmen, merchants, etc. After that, should we be astonished to see the most deplorable disasters come on those who swear through custom? Should we be astonished at the temporal evils that fall on them?

"A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house." (Eccli. xxiii, 12)

"For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is vain." (Ps. v, 10)

"For a morsel of bread he forsakes the truth." (Prov. xxviii, 21)

"The practice of swearing forms a habit of perjury." (S. Isid.)

"He who swears often, sometimes perjures himself; just as he who is accustomed to speak a great deal, sometimes speaks without consideration." (S. Chrys.)

"Those whose every word is true need not swear." (S. Hilary)

"Truth does not require an oath." (S. Isid.)

"But I say to you, swear not at all (unless in truth and judgment)." (Matth. v, 34). "But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no." (*Ibid.* 37)

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath." (Jas. v, 12)

We must know the matter about which we swear.

"No one swears justly unless he can know that about which he

swears. Know the truth before swearing, so that the bond of the oath may not injure you." (S. Ambr.)

When there is question of an oath it is especially forbidden to make use of any mental reservation.

"However artful the form of words employed in an oath may be, God, who is witness of the conscience, receives it in that sense in which he to whom it is sworn understands it." (S. Isid.)

3. *Justice.* That is to say, an oath should not be taken except to testify to the truth, or to promise that which is permitted, just, and becoming. To bind oneself by an oath to do evil would be a horrible crime. It would be not only to offend God, but even to bind oneself by an oath to offend Him!—to take God Himself as a witness of your purpose. How is it possible to express the abomination of so great a crime!

"If any one swears that he will commit a sin, he sins both in taking such an oath and in keeping it." (S. Thomas)

We cannot even bind ourselves by an oath not to do that which is good.

"An oath cannot be a bond of iniquity."

"An oath contrary to good morals does not bind him who takes it."

Such was the oath of Herod. (Mark vi, 23)

III. WHAT OBLIGATION DOES ONE CONTRACT BY AN OATH, AND WHEN CAN ONE BE DISPENSED FROM THIS OBLIGATION?

An unlawful oath does not bind. To do the evil one swears to do, would be to add crime to crime. Instead of doing what has been promised, he who has made a wicked promise should stir up in his heart a sincere sorrow for his impious oath and do penance for it.

But if the object of the oath is something that is just and lawful, the oath must be kept; to fail in keeping it would be a grave sin,—perjury,—unless something happens that diminishes the guilt or dispenses altogether from the obligation.

"If any man make a vow to the Lord, or bind himself by an oath, he shall not make his word void, but shall fulfil all that he promised." (Num. xxx, 3)

"Shall he escape that hath broken the covenant? As I live, I will lay upon his head the oath he hath despised, and the covenant he hath broken." (Ezech. xvii, 15, 19)

"Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls." (Eccli. xxiii, 9)

"Thou shalt not swear falsely by My name, nor profane the name of thy God." (Levit. xix, 12)

"Because of the perjury he has committed, let his right hand be cut off." (Capit. of Charlemagne)

Circumstances which suspend, or altogether dispense from, the obligation of an oath are: the impossibility of keeping the oath;—when the thing promised becomes unlawful;—if even though not unlawful, it places an obstacle to a greater good.

Division

I

The *conditions that should accompany an oath are:*

1. Truth,
2. Justice,
3. Judgment.

Each of these conditions should be developed briefly and it should be shown that all three are very seldom found united in the oaths that are so multiplied now-a-days without any necessity.

XXX

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

BLASPHEMY AND IMPRECATIONS

"He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die." (Levit. xxiv, 16)

The second Commandment forbids all false, rash, and unnecessary oaths; it forbids cursing and blasphemy also. If it is sad to see Christians profane the holy name of God by swearing without necessity, and sometimes even against truth and justice, what are we to think of the cursing and blasphemy that have become so common in our time? May my words fill you with a lively horror of these crimes! I. Curses are unworthy of a Christian;—nothing can excuse them. II. Blasphemy, its different kinds; its gravity.

I. IMPRECATIONS ARE UNWORTHY OF A CHRISTIAN

To curse or utter imprecations is to wish evil to oneself or others. If it is accompanied by an oath, it is called an execratory oath. The oath in itself is not bad; St. Paul seems to swear in this manner when he says: "I call God to witness upon my soul." (2 Cor. i, 23)

But if it is so necessary to observe the conditions of an ordinary oath, how much more necessary is it to observe them in an execratory oath.

And yet how often it happens that people take an oath of this kind without necessity, without judgment, to certify to the truth of that which they know to be false, or even to testify to their desire to do evil. (Examples of imprecations)

These imprecations on creatures are generally an outrage on the Creator.

They are unworthy of a Christian. They are still more unworthy and criminal when they are directed against reasonable creatures, against one's neighbor, against a husband or wife, against children. Consider what these are in relation to God and to yourself.

This sin is totally opposed to the charity which we should have for our neighbor; it is, therefore, always a mortal sin, unless,

1. A light evil only is wished, or the evil is not seriously wished;
2. Unless the imprecation is made in jest;

3. Or arises from a sudden fit of anger. Would you make use of these imprecations if you knew the evil you were doing to yourself, to others, your children, your parents. (Examples)

Vain excuses: "I was provoked . . . it was a fit of anger." But you should forgive those who injure you. "I have unnatural children." But is that the way to correct them? "When I curse any one, I do not really wish evil to that one." But less evil is not done nor is less scandal given.

"Blessed are the peace-makers . . . Blessed are the meek."

II. THE SIN OF BLASPHEMY

To blaspheme is to speak in a manner injurious to God and His saints. It is a much graver sin than cursing. It may be committed in several ways:

1. *In attributing faults to God,* or saying that He is wanting in any perfection, as Rabsaces:

"Who are they among all the gods of the nations that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord may deliver Jerusalem out of my hands?" (4 Kings xviii, 35).

Or the generals of Holofernes:

"Who is this that saith that the children of Israel can resist King Nabuchodonosor?" (Judith v, 27)

The impious and unbelievers say:

"What doth God know? and He judgeth as it were through a mist. The clouds are His covert, and He doth not consider our things." (Job xxii, 13, 14)

"He labors in vain that serveth God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowful before the Lord of hosts?" (Malach. iii, 14)

2. *When we attribute to ourselves that which should be referred to God as if* "Our mighty hand, and not the Lord, hath done all these things." (Deut. xxxii, 27)

Or when we attribute to the devil the works of God, as did the scribes:

"By the prince of devils He casteth out devils." (Mark iii, 22)

3. *When one says: I wish God did not exist, that He did not punish, etc.*

"The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God." (Ps. xiii, 1)

4. *When one speaks of God or of the saints with contempt:*

"Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self." (Matth. xxvii, 40)

Gravity of this sin.

The holy Fathers call blasphemy the greatest impiety, the most detestable crime, because it attacks God directly, immediately . . . and yet some Christians are guilty of blasphemy.

Who is God? What is man?

"Whom hast thou reproached, and whom hast thou blasphemed? . . . The Holy One of Israel." (Is. xxxvii, 23)

"O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer thou Me." (Mich. vi, 3)

"Christ was scourged by the rods of the Jews, but He is scourged not less cruelly by the blasphemies of false Christians." (S. Aug.)

"Blasphemy is an utterly horrible sacrilege, which seems to exceed the wickedness of those who laid hands on the Lord of majesty." (S. Bern.)

That the devils blaspheme God is not to be wondered at:

"They blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and wounds." (Apoc. xvi, 11)

But that a Christian should do so!

"You are a chosen generation . . . a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in time past were not a people; but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. ii, 9, 10)

"There is nothing more horrible than blasphemy. . . . Blasphemy does not merit pardon." (S. Jerome)

"There is nothing worse than blasphemy." (S. Chrys.)

"He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die; all the multitude shall stone him." (Levit. xxiv, 16)

God often punishes blasphemers in this life. (Examples). Hell is reserved for them in the next.

"Such as curse Him shall perish." (Ps. xxxvi, 22)

"[Therefore] let blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice." (Eph. iv, 31)

"Let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth, and meddle not with the names of saints, for thou shalt not escape free from them." (Eccli. xxiii, 10)

"[But say:] I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth." (Ps. xxxiii, 1)

"As we should suffer patiently injuries inflicted on ourselves; so when we see any one uttering blasphemies against God with a sacrilegious tongue, we should not suffer patiently, but should rise up against the sacrilege, and condemn the tongue by a truthful answer." (S. Jerome)

Division

I

Enormity of the sin of blasphemy, especially of the blasphemy committed by joining the word *holy* to the adorable name of God.

1. The blasphemer is guilty of *sacrilege*.

Sacrilege is the profanation of a holy thing; but what can be more holy than the name of God?

2. The blasphemer is guilty of *impiety*.

By impiety is meant contempt of God or of a holy thing. A man lives an impious life when he abandons the duties of his religion, neglects the salvation of his soul, and glories in the sins he commits.

But what injury does not the blasphemer do to God? . . . What is the religion of him who acts towards God in a way in which he would not dare to act towards the poorest of his fellow-creatures? What care has he for the salvation of his soul?

3. The blasphemer is *insane*.

Must he not have been mad to consent to lose the greatest of all goods, and to expose himself to infinite pain without receiving any profit, any advantages in so doing? . . . The drunkard condemns himself, but he has at least the pleasure of drinking and making merry. The thief condemns himself, but he hopes to enjoy the fruit of his theft. . . . But what compensation has the blasphemer, what satisfaction does he hope to reap from his sin? He is then a mad man, unless, perhaps, he finds pleasure in the very evil he commits, a feeling that is peculiar to the devils, and which authorizes me to say,

4. That a blasphemer is *a devil incarnate*.

That is going too far, you will say. No, it is simply the truth. The whole occupation of the devils in hell is to curse, to blaspheme the holy name of God; and since blasphemers use the same language on earth, why should we not give them the same name? But still there is a difference between them; it is, that the blasphemers of this world surpass in wickedness and malice the blasphemers in hell. The devils and the damned blaspheme; and for that reason God inflicts on them the most rigorous punishment. Christians blaspheme the name of God, while they are receiving from Him nothing but benefits! As they resemble the devils during life, blasphemers shall share their torments during eternity,—unless they change their lives and do penance.

XXXI

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

CURSING AND SWEARING

"Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matth. v, 22)

Those who are addicted to the habit of swearing usually seek to justify themselves thus:—I. "I curse and swear, but I do not mean any harm"; II. "I curse and swear, but not without reason." III. Their bad habit is not without a remedy.

I. I CURSE AND SWEAR, BUT I DO NOT MEAN ANY HARM

What sin is committed by him who swears at and curses his neighbor?

"In its nature it is a mortal sin, and is so much the graver the more he is bound to love and honor those whom he curses." (S. Thos.)

"He that curseth his father or mother shall die the death." (Exod. xxi, 17)

In order to understand the malice of this sin we must reflect seriously on the injury it inflicts, (1) on God, (2) on the neighbor, (3) on him who is guilty of it.

1. *Injury to God*

He who curses and swears turns against God and attacks His infinite perfections.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." (Ps. xxiii, 1)

The swearer ascribes all to the devil . . . when any trouble comes to him, he blames the dispositions of Divine Providence, instead of acknowledging that all things are arranged by the wisdom of God, to whom he should willingly submit, saying with holy Job:

"As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21)

He is so carried away by this execrable habit of cursing as to say that God is not just.

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth cursing." (Jas. iii, 10)

Wretched swearer, is it thus you treat the supreme majesty of your God! Irritated against your neighbor, a thousand times you wish him

dead; you wish that God would punish him, that the devil would seize him. Ah! unhappy man, what are you doing? After that do you complain that your business is not prospering, that you meet with nothing but trouble and misfortune. I am not surprised at that; it is caused by the habit of cursing. Yes, said the wise man, God so punishes the swearer that the evil never leaves his house.

"A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house." (Eccli. xxiii, 12)

2. *Injury to the Neighbor*

God sometimes hears the evil prayers of the curser.

"The mother's curse rooteth up the foundation." (Eccli. iii, 11)

"The prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul, shall be heard." (Eccli. iv, 6)

You wish your wife dead. You invoke the devil against your child, and yet you complain that you have no control over that child, that he is breaking your heart. I am not surprised that it is so: you have given him to the devil, and that evil spirit makes him disobedient, rebellious. Very often the curses of parents fall on their children. (Example related by S. Augustine).

3. *Injury to the Swearer Himself*

But if these maledictions against the neighbor are not always fulfilled, they generally fall back on him who pronounces them.

"He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blesing; and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment; and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones. . . . Like a girdle with which he is girded continually." (Ps. cxviii, 18, 19)

"Such as bless Him shall inherit the land; but such as curse Him shall perish." (Ps. xxxvi, 22)

In view of all this can it be maintained that there is no evil in cursing and swearing? Can you regard as a light fault that sin which is so injurious to God, to the neighbor, and to him who commits it?

II. "I CURSE AND SWEAR, BUT NOT WITHOUT REASON"

There is no excuse for this sin. To justify themselves those who curse and swear usually say, (1) that they do so only when carried away by anger, (2) or to certify to the truth, or (3) through custom and habit.

1. *People do so only when Carried Away by Anger*

You swear only when angry. But in this you are doubly guilty, both in giving way to anger, and in swearing when angry.

"The first darts of anger are always cursed." (Salvian)

"Whenever we meet with something which in our weakness we are unable to do, we lose our temper, and so in every movement of an angry mind we employ evil wishes for weapons." (Salvian)

See that man in a violent passion; he is angry and swears. Against whom? Very often he does not know. Against what? Often against inanimate things. Has that gambler lost his money at play, does that artisan see that his work is not progressing,—he is angry, he swears and curses.

"The speech that sweareth much, shall make the hair of the head stand upright; and its irreverence shall make one stop his ears. In the quarrels of the proud is the shedding of blood, and their cursing is a grievous hearing." (Eccli., xxvii, 15, 16)

2. *They Swear to Certify to the Truth*

But can that not be done without swearing? No one is less worthy of belief than those who swear habitually, because the man who is capable of swearing in this manner is capable of deceiving. Always speak the truth and you will be believed without swearing, . . . and God will bless your house, . . . while "the curse shall come . . . to the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house and shall consume it." (Zach. v, 4)

3. *They Swear Through Custom and Habit*

You swear through habit! It is not then through surprise or violent temptation, which might lessen your sin; it is by profession and through malice. You are, therefore, of the number of those "who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things." (Prov. ii, 14). Through habit! For a long time, then, you have been an enemy of God, have given scandal to your children!

"O child of the devil, enemy of all justice, thou ceasest not to pervert the right ways of the Lord." (Acts xiii, 10)

"Tremble, and expect at death as many devils as you will have pronounced maledictions." (Salvian)

III. THEIR BAD HABIT IS NOT WITHOUT A REMEDY

1. *To This Habit of Swearing Oppose a Contrary One; and for This Purpose Make Use of Efficacious Means*

If you had to pay a fine for each curse, you would very soon lose the habit of cursing. Will you then have less regard for the welfare of your soul than for a small temporal loss?

2. *Avoid Everything That Might Cause You to Swear*

"Above all things, my brethren, swear not." (Jas. v, 12)

Why have you those ambiguous expressions always on your tongue? By those expressions, which are so many disguised oaths, you teach your children and your servants to swear, and you give a bad example.

"Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil." (Matth. v, 37)

3. *To Anger Oppose Mildness and Patience*

"But now lay you also all away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth." (Col. iii, 8)

Give up your bad habits without delay, that anger, those outbursts of passion, those curses and scandalous discourses . . . Reflect seriously that if you swear in your anger, you have reason to fear that God in His anger may swear that you shall never enter into His kingdom:

"I swore in My wrath that they shall not enter into My rest." (Ps. xciv, 11)

Fear these words of the supreme Judge:

"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

Divisions

I

Unlawful oaths and blasphemies are:

1. *Sins of pure malice,* since no advantage is gained from them;
2. They are *sins of enormous gravity* that have a peculiar mark of impiety, because they attack God more directly;
3. They are more *severely punished* and less easily pardoned by God.

II

Those who swear and blaspheme the holy name of God in this life resemble the damned: they declare themselves

1. enemies of God,
2. enemies of other men,
3. their own enemies.

They who have contracted this habit should labor earnestly to correct it. Those who hear others blaspheme should, through zeal for God's glory, check the blasphemers, so as not to be made accomplices in their sin.

XXXII

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

VOWS

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." (Exod. xx, 7)

We are commanded by the second Commandment to fulfil the promises made to God or to the saints.

The promises made to God are called *vows*. They will form the subject of this instruction; and so as not to omit anything of interest on this matter, I will explain to you: I. What is meant by a vow; its merit and its conditions; II. The obligation that arises from it; III. The circumstances in which this obligation ceases.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY A VOW; ITS MERIT AND ITS CONDITIONS

A vow is a promise regarding a greater good, freely made to God, with the intention of binding him who makes it.

Difference between a promise and a simple resolution.

"Of a greater good," that is to say, we promise God something which, all things considered, it is better to do than not to do. What we promise to God ought to be pleasing to Him; would He accept with pleasure an engagement in which we would undertake to do something that would contribute less to His glory than the opposite thing? For example, pilgrimages that would expose us to the danger of missing Mass, or neglecting other essential duties?

A vow properly so called can be made to God only; because a vow is an act of religion by which we profess that God is the Creator of all that is good.

"The Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship Him with sacrifices and offerings; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them." (Is. xix, 21)

But we can at the same time address ourselves to the saints in order to obtain more easily from God what we desire . . . Ignorance of many persons on this matter.

A vow ought to be free and voluntary.

"God desires voluntary sacrifices, not those that are forced from us." (S. Bonav.)

Observe that in a vow there is no other obligation than that by which he who makes it intends to bind himself, if the object of the vow is not otherwise commanded . . . Observe also that we cannot and should not make a vow to do that which we cannot do without injuring the rights of others, without breaking some law.

Vows are very praiseworthy and meritorious, provided they are made with prudence.

"If any one shall vow, it shall be holy, and cannot be changed." (Levit. xxvii, 9)

"The vows of the just are acceptable [to the Lord]." (Prov. xv, 8)

Moreover, other things being equal, a good work performed under a vow is more meritorious than it would be if done without a vow. . . . Vows are pleasing to God: proofs, the great graces He often grants to those who invoke Him by means of vows.

"Vow ye, and pay to the Lord, your God." (Ps. lxxv, 12)

Vows ought to be made with prudence, because if made impulsively, without reflection, without advice, they are often injurious,—they are, as it were, so many snares which the devil employs to trouble souls, both by the frequent transgression of these engagements, and by the dispensation from them, which is often asked for without sufficient reasons. Vows of this kind can only displease God.

"An unfaithful and foolish promise displeases God." (Eccle. v, 3)

Before making a vow we should carefully examine what we intend to promise, . . . consider the inconveniences that may result, . . . consult our confessor.

"My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." (Eccli. xxxii, 24)

"If a woman vow any thing, and bind herself with an oath, being in her father's house, and but yet a girl in age; . . . if her father immediately as soon as he heard it gainsaid it, both her vow and her oath shall be void, neither shall she be bound to what she promised." (Num. xxx, 4, 6)

The person vowing therefore ought to be *sui iuris*.

II. The Obligation that Arises from a Vow

We must fulfil the vows we make, within the time fixed, or as soon as possible.

This obligation is grave, unless there is question of some light matter, or because of forgetfulness.

"When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it; because the Lord thy God will require it. And if

thou delay, it shall be reputed to thee for a sin." (Deut. xxiii, 21)

"That which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe, and shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will and with thy own mouth." (*Ibid.*, 23)

"Having damnation [widows breaking their vows] because they have made void their first faith." (1 Tim. v, 12)

"Having made a vow thou hast bound thyself; thou art not permitted to do another thing." (S. Aug.)

A man is bound to keep the promises he has made to his fellow-man; with greater reason is he bound to keep those he has made to God . . . Would we not be guilty of ingratitude to God if we did not give Him the small thing we promised Him, especially if we have got from Him what we wanted?

"If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it; it is much better not to vow, than after the vow not to perform the thing promised." (Eccle. v, 3, 4)

"If any man make a vow to the Lord, or bind himself by an oath, he shall not make his word void, but shall fulfil all that he promised." (Num. xxx, 3)

God sometimes punishes visibly those who break their vows. A young man having failed to keep his vow, died in despair.

"The Lord has appeared to me in anger saying: I called and you refused; go therefore into the gates of hell." (S. Bonav.)

The obligation arising out of a substantial vow passes on to a man's heirs: a real or substantial vow is that by which a man binds himself to give such or such a thing. It is not the same with the obligation arising out of a purely personal vow.

"I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips have uttered." (Ps. lxv, 13)

"I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people." (Ps. cxv, 14)

III. Circumstances in which this Obligation Ceases

There are circumstances in which this obligation is suspended, there are others in which it ceases altogether.

1. When some notable change has taken place in the object of the vow, *e. g.*, if the thing has become unlawful or impossible.

2. When for good reasons the person who made the vow has obtained a dispensation from the Church, for the Church can dispense from vows.

"Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matth. xvi, 19)

"For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes, I have done it in the person of Christ." (2 Cor. ii, 10)

But a dispensation from a vow would be useless if obtained under a false pretence.

Never make a vow lightly. Be faithful to those you have made.

XXXIII

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SUNDAY

"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." (Exod. xx, 8)

We are commanded by the third commandment to keep the Sunday holy. I. Institution of the Sunday. II. What is forbidden on Sunday. III. What is commanded.

I. INSTITUTION OF THE SUNDAY

Man was created to know, love, and serve God. His duties and occupations do not permit him to devote each day of the week in a special manner to the divine service. There must, therefore, be a fixed day. God has fixed it: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." God wished that the Sabbath day should be as a token of the alliance which He made with man.

"I gave them also My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them; and that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezech. xx, 12)

On the part of God the sabbath is a sign of the desire He has for the homage of his servants, of the pleasure with which He receives it, of the reward to be bestowed on those who give it. On the part of man it is a public and solemn protestation of the honor, the service, and the submission which he owes to God.

God wished that the seventh day should be consecrated to Him in memory of the creation of the world, which He performed in six days, and of His repose on the seventh day. The repose of the Lord is a figure of the eternal repose which He has prepared for His elect. Oh! how the thought of that everlasting rest should strengthen and encourage us! You are burdened with work, afflicted by suffering, be comforted yet a little time, and you will repose for all eternity in the bosom of God. . . .

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, . . . nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." (Apoc. xxi, 4)

The damned, on the other hand, shall be forever excluded from this rest. Listen to their cries of regret:

"We fools . . . wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath it profited us? . . . All these things are passed away like a shadow." (Wis. v, 4 ff.)

The Apostles, instructed by Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Ghost, substituted the Sunday for the sabbath or Saturday.

Why did they do this? Because it was on a Sunday that Christ rose from the dead, that the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles. In consecrating the Sunday by these solemn mysteries, God made clearly known His wish that in the new law the Sunday should belong to Him in a special manner, that it should be the Lord's day, *Dies Domini;* a holy day, a day wholly consecrated to His worship,—to gratitude for the benefits which all Christians have received from Him. There is, then, an obligation by which we are bound to sanctify the Sunday, and even more strictly bound than the Jews were to sanctify the sabbath because the mysteries of redemption and grace which were accomplished on the Sunday are greater than those of creation.

"The Lord's day is placed above the sabbath in testimony of the resurrection." (S. Aug.)

"The resurrection of the Lord has promised us an eternal day, and has made holy for us that day which is called the Lord's day. That day seems specially to belong to the Lord, because on it He rose from the dead." (S. Aug.)

"The sabbath has been consecrated to God, so that those who do not consecrate their whole life to Him, may devote to Him at least a very small portion of it." (S. John Damasc.)

II. WHAT IS FORBIDDEN ON SUNDAY

"You shall do no servile work therein." (Levit. xxiii, 25)

Servile works are the works slaves used to do, such as digging, ploughing, etc.

The chief reason for this prohibition is that God, wishing that the Sunday should be consecrated to His service, and knowing that covetousness would turn men aside from the fulfilment of this duty if they were allowed to work on that day, has forbidden them to do so.

"Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy work. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested upon the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." (Exod. xx, 9–11)

"Remember that thou also didst serve in Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out from thence with a strong hand, and a stretched-out arm. Therefore hath He commanded thee that thou shouldst observe the sabbath-day." (Deut. v, 15)

"Keep thou My sabbath: for it is holy unto you; he that shall profane it shall be put to death: he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of his people." (Exod. xxxi, 14)

"Keep My sabbaths, . . . and I will give you rain in due seasons, and the ground shall bring forth its increase." (Levit. xxvi, 2–4)

Works of mercy and works of public or private necessity are allowed on Sunday. But the necessity must be real, the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities must be obtained, and those who take part in the work must assist at Mass when it is possible to do so.

Unnecessary work on Sunday brings no gain; it does not remain unpunished, even in this life. (Examples.)

What! You have worked on a Sunday and nothing has happened to you! You dare to say: "I have sinned, and what harm has befallen me?" (Eccli. v, 4). Rash man! you will not escape the justice of God:

"For the Most High is a patient rewarder." (*Ibid.*)

"He is patient because He is eternal."

Hear and tremble: "I will chastise you seven times for your sins." (Levit. xxvi, 8)

"The seventh day shall be holy unto you, the sabbath and the rest of the Lord: he that shall do any work on it shall be put to death." (Exod. xxxv, 2)

Sinful works and dangerous amusements are specially forbidden on Sunday.

"The Christian observes the true sabbath by abstaining from servile work, that is, from sin." (S. Aug.)

"They have leisure for trifles; and when God commands them to observe the sabbath, they employ themselves in doing those things that are forbidden on the sabbath." (*Ibid.*)

They have said: "Let us abolish all the festival days of God from the land." (Ps. lxxiii, 8)

The devil exults at this:

"The enemies have seen her, and have mocked at her sabbaths." (Lam. i, 7)

"He who does not sin, truly observes the sabbath." (S. Aug.)

"It is better to spend the whole day digging than dancing at feasts. For it is better to plough than to dance." (S. Aug.)

We cannot refrain from saying (and we could weep bitterly over the disorder) that there is hardly any time, any day, when so many sins are

committed, when God is so dishonored and insulted, as on Sundays and holydays of obligation. You know it, frequenting public houses, intemperance, drunkenness, scandal, calumny, debauchery, indecency in dress . . . That is how a great number pass the Sunday. They reserve for this day all the sins which they have not time nor opportunity to commit during the week. It is a dreadful thing to say, but it is none the less true: the feasts of the Lord are turned into feasts of the devil. I ask you, can these solemnities, these exterior practices of piety, soiled and mixed up as they are with all those abominations, be pleasing to God? Listen to what He says by the mouth of the prophet: "My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities." (Is. i, 14)

"I hate and have rejected your festivities." (Amos v, 21)

"I will scatter upon your face the dung of your solemnities." (Malach. ii, 3)

"What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath-day?" (2 Esdras xiii, 17)

"Oh! the miserable blindness of Christians who commit more and graver sins on Sunday than on all the other days of the week! For since they must work for their living on the other days of the week, on Sundays, when they should work for the soul and give themselves to God, they commit many sins." (S. Antoninus)

"It is certain that he who passes the Sunday in sin, cannot pass it in the service of God." (Origen)

"He who frees himself from the works of this world, so that he may have time for spiritual works, truly celebrates the sabbath of the Lord." (S. Peter Damian)

III. WHAT WE ARE COMMANDED TO DO ON SUNDAY

1. *To Hear Mass*

Every one who has come to the use of reason is obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to hear Mass with attention, respect, and devotion, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, unless dispensed from doing so by legitimate reasons.

"The observance of the Lord's Day should be so fervent that Christians should not engage in anything except prayer and the solemnities of the Mass." (Council of Trent)

"On the Lord's Day all worldly labor should cease and Christians should give themselves up to prayer, so as to expiate by their prayers on that day the faults committed during the week." (S. Greg.)

2. *To Assist at the Offices of the Church*

It is becoming to assist at the evening devotions and the other divine offices celebrated on this day. The Church does not, it is true, impose this on us as a formal obligation; but she invites and strongly recommends us to be present during these holy exercises. That alone should induce a Christian to assist at them regularly.

"That on these days, freed from worldly business, we may devote ourselves to the divine worship alone." (S. Aug.)

"But he who cannot do this, should pray at home, and should not neglect to fulfil his obligations to God, or to perform his duty." (S. Aug.)

3. *To Attend Instructions*

"They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles." (Acts ii, 42)

"They were persevering with one mind in prayer." (Acts i, 14)

4. *To Practice Works of Religion and Charity*

"Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation." (Jas. i, 27)

"He celebrates the sabbath badly who neglects to do good works on that day." (S. Aug.)

"Gather it six days; but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord. How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and My law? See that the Lord hath given you the sabbath." (Exod. xvi, 26, 28, 29)

"I gave them My sabbaths . . . And they have provoked Me, . . . and they have grievously violated My sabbaths. I said therefore that I would pour out My indignation upon them in the desert, and would consume them." (Ezech. xx, 12, 13)

"Blessed is the man . . . that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, that keepeth his hands from doing any evil." (Is. lvi, 2)

Divisions

I

Three things prevent Christians from sanctifying the Sunday as they should: (1) Covetousness, (2) debauchery, (3) idleness.

1. *Covetousness* causes many to work on those days on the pretence of poverty, or through fear of falling into it. Such people sin against the letter of the commandment, which forbids bodily labor on the days consecrated to God.

2. *Debauchery* makes many regard the Sunday as a day of amusement and dissipation. These sin against the spirit of the precept, which forbids all dissipation that would take our thoughts away from God.

3. *Idleness* induces people not to do anything to sanctify those days, and they live in forgetfulness of the duties of piety which God demands from them. They sin against the object of the commandment, which forbids the omission of good works.

II

God has commanded the Sunday to be kept holy for *three reasons:*

1. Because He wishes us to give Him on that day the *worship* He demands from us;

2. To induce men to remember His *benefits;*

3. Because He pours out His *graces* more abundantly on these days than on others.

XXXIV

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

DUTIES OF CHILDREN TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land." (Exod. xx, 12)

God has placed this precept, which commands us to honor our parents, immediately after those that impose on us the obligation of loving and serving Him, in order to make known to us that, after the supreme honor and worship due to Him, there is nothing more necessary, more just, than the duties of children towards their parents. These duties are: I. Love; II. Respect; III. Obedience; IV. Assistance.

I. LOVE

In a certain sense this duty includes all the others. Love your parents; that is the cry of nature, of religion, of gratitude.

"With thy whole heart honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother. Remember that thou hadst not been born but through them; and make a return to them as they have done for thee." (Eccli. vii, 29, 30)

"Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life; for thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb." (Tob. iv, 3, 4)

Should you not love your parents more than all else in the world after God? And how great love should you not have for them who have had for you a love so tender, so generous, so efficacious? All your thoughts, words, and acts should bear the stamp of your love for them; acts of attention, kindness, a respectful manner, gentle words, affectionate services, fervent prayers. But how monstrous it would be if you were so carried away by passion, selfishness, etc., as to hate those whom you should love so much!—so far as even to wish them dead! Do you not see unnatural children who bear the paternal yoke with impatience, who break out into murmurs, outrages, curses, maledictions against their parents?

Such violation of the holy love due to parents will never go unpunished.

"He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness. The inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning, in the end shall be without a blessing." (Prov. xx, 20, 21)

Nevertheless, filial love has its limits.

"He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matth. x, 37)

"How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii, 49)

"Love your parents, but give the first place to God." (S. Aug.)

"You must honor your father, but you must obey God; the generator must be loved, but the Creator must be preferred to him." (S. Aug.)

II. RESPECT

Have for your parents the deference which nature and religion demand. To have respect for your parents is to conduct yourselves towards them in a manner loving, modest, affectionate, and submissive.

"Honor thy father in work and word and all patience; that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end." (Eccli. iii, 9, 10)

"He that feareth the Lord honoreth his parents, and will serve them as his masters that brought him into the world." (Eccli. iii, 8)

"A mild answer [of a child] breaketh the wrath [of a father]." (Prov. xv, 1)

"The glory of a man is from the honor of his father, and a father without honor is the disgrace of his son." (Eccli. iii, 13)

"If his [the father's] understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength: for the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten." (Eccli. iii, 15)

The sins opposed to filial respect are contempt, mockery, reproaches, etc. How many there are who, because of these faults, are wanting in respect to their parents! Children, who do not respect your parents, you pierce the heart of her who bore you, you hurry to the grave the gray hairs of your father and mother. There is hardly a light fault in this matter; every fault is grave, criminal. The sins against the fourth commandment are crimes that deserve the vengeance of Heaven and earth.

"He that striketh his father or mother, shall be put to death. He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death." (Exod. xxi, 15, 17)

"The eye that mocketh at his father, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it." (Prov. xxx, 17)

Cham dared to cast a glance of mockery at his father, Noë:

"Cursed be Chanaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." (Gen. ix, 25)

"Grieve not your father in his life." (Eccli. iii, 14)

"He is cursed of God that angers his mother." (Eccli. iii, 18)

"Glory not in the dishonor of thy father; for his shame is no glory to thee." (Eccli. iii, 12)

"He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy." (Prov. xix, 26)

"Honor for God and respect for parents are the ornaments of youth." (S. Ambr.)

III. OBEDIENCE

Obey your parents promptly and joyfully in everything that is not contrary to the law of God.

This obedience is commanded by nature, by the law of God, by justice, by the interests of the children themselves.

"My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Prov. vi, 20)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is just." (Eph. vi, 7)

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to the Lord." (Col. iii, 20)

"For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Heb. xiii, 17)

"A fool laugheth at the instruction of his father; but he that regardeth reproofs shall become prudent." (Prov. xv, 5)

"Men shall be lovers of themselves . . . disobedient to parents. . . . Now these avoid." (2 Tim. iii, 2, 5)

Obedience springs from love:

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John xiv, 15)

Prompt obedience:

"Joseph answered his father: I am ready." (Gen. xxxvii, 14)

The young Tobias replied:

"I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded." (Tob. v, 1)

The example of Jesus Christ:

"He was subject to them." (Luke ii, 51)

But what is to be said of the obedience of those children who murmur, grumble, and complain, when asked by their parents to do anything, and who obey with reluctance? Sulky children! you do not love your parents, since you obey them so unwillingly! Listen, and understand what punishment you deserve:

"If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience; they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them: This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions, he giveth himself to revelling, and to debauchery and banquetings. The people of the city shall stone him; and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all hearing it may be afraid." (Deut. xxi, 18–21)

In everything that is not contrary to the will of God, "we ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts v, 29)

"It is the nature of duty or piety to be cruel in this matter." (S. Jerome)

"We must honor our parents; but it is no sin or neglect of filial duty to leave our parents for the purpose of preaching the word of God." (S. Aug.)

"It is impious to despise or abandon one's mother; but to abandon her in order to devote oneself to the love and service of Christ, is not impious, but very meritorious." (S. Bern.)

IV. ASSISTANCE

Give them all the spiritual and temporal help they need as far as you can do so.

1. *Spiritual help:* prayer, zeal and solicitude for their salvation. Children, be zealous for the perfection and salvation of your parents. There are circumstances in which prudent children become the guardians of their parents' souls; when the parents have bad habits that endanger their salvation. Then indeed Christian children can and ought to make respectful representations to their parents, but in a spirit of sweetness and filial tenderness. The zeal of children should be most earnest when death is at hand; they should speak to their parents in a spirit of love and respect, recalling to their minds the thought of the future life, see that they receive the last Sacraments in time. They should carry out the last wishes of their parents, pray for them, and get others to pray for them after death.

2. *Temporal help.* The wise man says to you: "Son, support the old age of thy father." (Eccli. iii, 14). "Make a return to them as they have done for thee." (Eccli. vii, 30)

If your parents are in want, you owe them nourishment, maintenance, comfort in their old age, their infirmities, their illness. It is your duty to give them the helping hand that will support their tottering footsteps. Ungrateful children, would you be so barbarous

as to refuse to prolong the life of those who have given life to you?

"Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father; and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother." (Eccli iii, 18)

"O son, support your parents; you owe to them what you have, you owe to them what you are. If you have not supported them, you have killed them." (S. Ambr.)

And yet there are children who dare to abandon their parents in old age, and say to them: "The place is too strait for me, make me room to dwell in." (Is. xlix, 20)

There are some who go so far as to reproach their parents with living too long! Monsters! You are then weary of being in the company of those who should be dearer to you than all else in this world!

By making their old age sad, you snatch from them the breath of life that remains to them! You push them into the grave. There are children who carry their hatred of their parents so far as to refuse to visit them, even on the bed of death,—so far as to deprive themselves of the consolation of receiving their parents' last sigh, and this because they imagine that their parents have left more money or property to other children, or because there is nothing else to be got from them!

"He that stealeth anything from his father, or from his mother; and saith: This is no sin, is the partner of a murderer." (Prov. xxviii, 24)

"Remember thy father and thy mother, for thou sittest in the midst of great men: lest God forget thee in their sight, and thou, by thy daily custom, be infatuated and suffer reproach: and wish that thou hadst not been born, and curse the day of thy nativity." (Eccli. xxiii, 18, 19)

"He who acted wickedly towards his father deserves to have a wicked son." (S. Ambr.)

"In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Mark iv, 27)

"Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother." (Deut. xxvii, 16)

"The mother's curse rooteth up the foundation." (Eccli. iii, 11)

On the contrary: "The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children." (Eccli. iii, 11)

"He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children, and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. He that honoreth his father shall enjoy a long life." (Eccli. iii, 5–7)

"Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise. That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived upon the earth." (Eph. vi, 2–3)

Divisions

I

Children ought to love, honor, respect, and serve their parents,

1. Because to do so is an *act of justice:* "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is just." (Eph. vi, 1)

2. Because *God wills it:* "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord." (Coloss. iii, 20)

3. Because *gratitude* obliges them to do so: "Honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother. Remember that thou hadst not been born but through them; and make a return to them as they have done for thee." (Eccli. vii, 29, 30)

II

1. Children should *assist their parents* in their necessities, their old age, their illness.

2. They ought to *conceal the faults* and imperfections of their parents.

3. They ought to *bear with the bad temper* of their parents, with their impatience, rebukes, remembering what trouble they themselves caused their parents in childhood.

III

1. God often permits parents to be treated by their children as they themselves treated their own parents.

2. As a long life is the reward of respect shown to parents, so a *sudden death* is often the punishment of rebellious children.

Cham, having seen his father in a rather indecent state, mocked him, and wished his brothers to join in the mockery. He was cursed. Absalom, who, after killing his brother, had the ingratitude to rebel and take up arms against his father, was punished in a striking manner; having lost the battle, he was seeking safety in flight, when he got entangled in the branches of an oak tree and was pierced through the heart with a lance, leaving a terrible example of the chastisement of ungrateful children.

XXXV

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

"And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord." (Eph. vi, 4)

Parents should provide for their children those things that are necessary for the welfare both of body and soul. I. Parents must strive to educate their children and to settle them in life; II. They must train them up in the practice of piety and the love of virtue; in the discipline and correction of the Lord.

I. PARENTS MUST STRIVE TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN AND SETTLE THEM IN LIFE

The burden of the married state is heavier than is commonly believed; and S. Paul assures us that those who enter it will not fail to meet with many afflictions and sorrows.

"Such shall have tribulations of the flesh. But I spare you." (1 Cor. vii, 28)

Afflictions and bodily pains. Mothers, you know that only too well —pains of child-birth, continual anxiety in bearing with the infirmities inseparable from infancy—these are your occupations and your crosses. . . . Sorrow and trouble of mind; these are even greater than those of the body, because, without speaking of the uneasiness often caused by their conduct, is not the obligation imposed on you of bringing up your children in a Christian manner, a source of very great anxiety? Nevertheless, your state of life obliges you to this . . . and with regard to the body that education includes three things: (1) food, (2) maintenance, and (3) settlement in life.

1. *Food*

God Himself, our common Father, the Model of all parents, nourishes His children!

"I have brought up children." (Is. i, 2)

"He has given food to those that fear Him." (Ps. cx, 4)

But how does He nourish us? Besides the material bread which

Divine Providence supplies to us each day, Jesus Christ gives us His own Body and Blood as nourishment:

"I am become like to a pelican in the wilderness." (Ps. ci, 7)

How guilty are those fathers and mothers who, addicted to drunkenness, gambling, and debauchery, reduce their children to beggary! They resemble the ostrich:

"Even the sea-monsters have drawn out the breast, they have given suck to their young; the daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostrich in the desert." (Lam. iv, 3)

"The ostrich . . . leaveth her eggs on the earth. . . . She forgetteth that the foot may tread upon them, or that the beast of the field may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers." (Job xxxix, 14–16)

Is not this what you do, unnatural fathers and mothers? You take no more trouble about your children than if they were strangers.

"Let him who has children bring them up in the purity of God, not in the uncleanness of the devil. What will it profit him to have a son, to nourish and love him, if he bring him up for eternal torments?" (S. Aug.)

2. *Maintenance*

"For neither ought the children to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." (2 Cor. xii, 14)

Children should hand over to their parents what they earn; but the parents ought to clothe them and maintain them decently, according to their position, without countenancing either pride or luxury in them.

"But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. vi, 8)

3. *Settlement in Life*

There are parents who neglect and abandon their children. There are some who allow their children to lead idle and dissolute lives: that is a very grave fault.

"Hast thou children? Instruct them and bow down their neck from their childhood." (Eccli. vii, 25)

Children must be instructed, accustomed to work, taught a trade, and directed in the choice of a state of life.

There is another excess, that of those parents who, in order to enrich their children, become guilty of avarice and injustice.

Unhappy parents! They believe they are making their children rich: they are deceived; because

"Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know the rising thereof." (Is. xlvii, 11)

Then there is the culpable preference of parents for one or other of their children.

The partiality which Jacob showed for his virtuous son, Joseph, cost him many tears and much sorrow.

"Let the same love be bestowed on children who are united by the same bonds of nature." (S. Ambr.)

In settling their children in life parents should not carry their views too far. They should take special care to see that their children become good Christians. Like the parents of the chaste Susanna:

"Her parents being just, had instructed their daughter according to the law." (Dan. xiii, 3)

"Hast thou daughters? have a care of their body, and show not thy countenance gay towards them. Marry thy daughter well, and thou shalt do a great work, and give her to a wise man." (Eccli. vii, 26, 27)

II. PARENTS MUST TRAIN UP THEIR CHILDREN IN THE PRACTICE OF PIETY AND THE LOVE OF VIRTUE

With regard to the spiritual needs, parents should instruct their children and give them a good example.

1. *Instruction*

Fathers and mothers are the guardians and protectors of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. They should *instruct* their children:

"Be apostles in your family; the Apostle calls this a domestic church; govern and guide this church." (S. Chrys.)

"Instruct thy son, and he shall refresh thee, and shall give delight to thy soul." (Prov. xxix, 17)

This obligation is so important that God renewed it constantly in the Old Law:

"These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them to thy children." (Deut. vi, 6, 7). "What shalt thou teach? We were bond-slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand." (*Ibid.*, 21)

Why are those admonitions so often repeated in the Holy Scriptures? To make known to you, parents, that your first and greatest care should be to teach your children the Commandments of God and the truths of religion; that you should instruct them, not in the maxims and customs of the world, but in the importance of their eternal salvation, in their duty as Christians.

Parents should say to their children, as the royal prophet:

"Come, children, hearken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Ps. xxxiii, 12)

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Prov. i, 8)

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend that you may know prudence." (Prov. iv, 1)

Children should always bear in mind the lessons learned from their parents.

"Our fathers have declared to us." (Ps. xliii, 2)

"Therefore the lips of parents are books." (S. Chrys.) May they be good books!

"He that instructeth his son shall be praised in him, and shall glory in him in the midst of them of his household." (Eccli. xxx, 2)

"Instruct thy son and labor about him." (*Ibid.*, 13)

"The father shall make the truth known to the children." (Is. xxxviii, 19)

"He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him correcteth him betimes." (Prov. xiii, 24)

"The insolence of children is traced back to the negligence of parents." (S. Ambr.)

"Those who instruct their children badly should be called murderers, not parents." (S. Bern.)

2. *Correction*

Of all periods of life youth is that in which help is most required. If young people are abandoned to themselves, what will become of them? That is a mystery even for the wise man:

"Three things are hard to me, and the fourth I am utterly ignorant of: the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man in youth." (Prov. xxx, 18, 19)

Vigilance must be combined with correction.

"The father waketh for the daughter when no man knoweth, and the care for her taketh away his sleep, when she is young, lest she pass away the flower of her age, and when she is married, lest she should be hateful." (Eccli. xlii, 9)

"The intimate friendship of a man for a woman is that of a wolf for a lamb." (S. Bern.)

"We are generally the last to perceive the evils of our home, and we are ignorant of the vices of our children, vices that are spoken of by our neighbors." (S. Jerome)

"On a daughter that turneth not away herself, set a strict watch; lest finding an opportunity she abuse herself." (Eccli. xxvi, 13)

Parents should correct their children with mildness.

"Instruct such a one in a spirit of meekness." (Gal. vi, 1). But

if mild measures fail, let them not neglect severer remedies:

"He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, correcteth him betimes." (Prov. xiii, 24)

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away." (Prov. xxii, 15)

"Rebuke them sharply." (Tit. i, 13)

"Withhold not correction from a child; for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver him from hell." (Prov. xxiii, 13, 14)

"A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him lest thou have sorrow. . . . Give him not liberty in his youth. . . . Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee." (Eccli. xxx, 8–12)

"He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors." (*Ibid.*, 1)

"Such as I love I rebuke and chastise." (Apoc. iii, 19)

"The more parents love their children, the more they should urge them to lead a good life." (S. Aug.)

"Young people are recalled from a life of sin more by fear than by reason." (S. Ambr.)

"What son is there whom the father does not correct?" (Hebr. xii, 7)

S. Augustine attributes the disorders of his youth to the weakness and mistaken kindness of his father:

"You did not care, father, how I should grow up, or whether I would be chaste, if only I was eloquent. The weeds of lust sprang up in my heart, and there was no one to root them out."

The same thing happens to-day. Parents excuse the faults of their children; sometimes they praise them or pretend not to notice them. They always think their children perfect. "There is no hand to root out"; and what happens? These children fall into the greatest sins. Moreover, S. Augustine, who blames the mistaken fondness his father had for him, praises the piety of his mother, whose feelings were very different:

"She so brought up her children that she was disturbed as often as she saw they were wandering from Thee [O God]."

There, fathers and mothers, is the rule you are to follow. God has given you children: you should watch over them, inspire them with a love of virtue and a horror of vice.

"It cannot happen that the son of so many tears should perish." (S. Ambr. quoted by S. Aug.)

"A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii, 6)

"Youth is pliable and soft as wax, which easily receives the image of whatever forms are impressed on it, and yields without difficulty." (S. Basil)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom; but the child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame." (Prov. xxix, 15)

"Parents who neither correct nor instruct their children shall have to answer for these children's sins." (Origen)

"The mistaken gentleness of the father produces a most pernicious effect on the son, who shall afterwards justly feel the severity of God." (S. Aug.)

"O sad liberty! O dreadful ruin of children! O deadly love of parents! They say they love the children whom they cause to be murdered; they say they love those for whom they are preparing eternal misery." (S. Aug.)

3. *Good Example*

Children have no more frequent or familiar conversations than those held with their parents, who are at the same time their teachers and the witnesses of their lives.

"Children have their parents as teachers and witnesses of their lives." (S. Bern.)

As teachers, parents should instruct and correct their children; as eye-witnesses they should give them edification and not do anything that would scandalize them.

"The greatest respect is due to the child."

"Let the wanton time of youths be kept far from her. Let her not understand foul language; let her be ignorant of worldly songs; let her not learn to swear; let her consider deceit a crime, and let her be ignorant of the world; let her live an angelic life. Let her not see anything in you or in her father that would cause her to sin. Do you, parents, be careful of your spotless child, and remember that she can be taught more by example than by precept." (Advice of S. Jerome to a lady regarding the education of her daughter.)

"In your conversation teach them [your children] to avoid what is evil, to desire what is good, to hate sin, to fear judgment, and to love God." (Euseb.) By their bad example parents draw the malediction of God on themselves and their children.

"Let his children be carried about vagabonds, and beg; and let them be cast out of their dwellings. May the usurer search all his sub-

stance; and let strangers plunder his labors." (Ps. cviii, 10, 11)

"They shall suffer not only for their own sins, but also for those their children have committed." (S. Chrys.)

Influence of the Bad Example of Parents:

"Their children also and grandchildren, as their fathers did, so do they unto this day, serving idols." (4 Kings xvii, 41)

"I have foretold unto him that I will judge his house for ever, for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them." (1 Kings iii, 13)

The children will one day turn against their parents:

"We have done nothing ourselves, the perfidy of others has ruined us; we feel that our parents are murderers." (S. Cypr.)

"They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils." (Ps. cv, 37)

"Rejoice not in ungodly children, if they be multiplied; neither be delighted in them if the fear of God be not with them. Far better is one that feareth God than a thousand ungodly children. And it is better to die without children than to leave ungodly children." (Eccli. xvi, 1, 3, 4)

Happy are those parents who at the hour of death will be able to repeat the words of our Divine Saviour:

"Father, of them whom Thou hast given me, I have not lost any one." (John xviii, 9)

"While I was with them I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou gavest me have I kept; and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. . . . I have given them Thy word." (John xvii, 12, 14)

Divisions

I

There are *three things* that should *compel parents to bring up their children well:*

1. The *glory of God,* who in giving them children, imposed on them the obligation of bringing up these children in His service;

2. The *good of society,* to which they ought to make themselves useful;

3. The *welfare of both children and parents,* since the happiness or misery of both depends on the education given to the children.

II

Parents Owe Their Children:

1. Before birth, love and care, preserving their life and avoiding

everything that might injure them; and after birth they should procure for them the spiritual life of the soul, and give them what they require to preserve the life of the body;

2. Education, correction, and good example.

XXXVI

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

DUTIES OF SERVANTS TOWARDS THEIR MASTERS

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ." (Eph. vi, 5)

God wishes that order should reign everywhere. Masters and servants have their reciprocal duties and rights; hence the harmony in society.

"There is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God." (Rom. xiii, 1)

Servants should: I. Respect their masters; II. Obey them in everything that is in accordance with the law of God; III. Serve them faithfully.

I. SERVANTS SHOULD RESPECT THEIR MASTERS

They are their superiors in the order of Divine Providence.

"Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor; lest the name of the Lord and His doctrine be blasphemed." (1 Tim. vi, 1)

The authority which they have over you comes from God: All power is from God. You should honor them with an interior respect, seeing in them the person of Jesus Christ: "Serve ye the Lord Christ." (Coloss. iii, 2, 4). . . . With an outward respect, not speaking badly of them.

You sin against the respect due to them when you answer them with insolence, when you break out into insulting or slanderous language against them, when you spread abroad lies and calumnies about them.

"The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matth. xx, 28)

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." (Phil. ii, 5–7)

"I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John vi, 38)

Respect your masters, whoever they may be.

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also the froward. For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully." (1 Pet. ii, 18, 19)

II. SERVANTS SHOULD OBEY THEIR MASTERS

This is evidently a duty of justice which religion imposes on them. They have devoted themselves to the service of their masters, that is an agreement between both, in consideration of the wages given.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh." (Coloss. iii, 22)

With docility, with pleasure, promptly, without murmuring; in the absence of the master as well as in his presence.

"Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving as to the Lord, and not to men." (Ephes. vi, 6, 7)

With a good heart according to justice and honesty:

"Work from the heart as to the Lord and not to men; in the simplicity of heart, fearing God, . . . knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritence." (Coloss. iii, 22–24)

"Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Rom. xiii, 5)

"You who have masters according to the flesh, who owe any condition of service, obey your masters and love them from your heart, not as eye-servers, but doing your service through love; because God has both placed them to govern you, and you to serve them." (S. Aug.)

But if the commands of the master are contrary to the law of God, then you must obey God rather than men.

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts v, 29)

"If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye." (Acts iv, 19)

"A servant is not bound to obey his master in anything in which he is not subject to the master." (S. Thom.)

"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. i, 10)

"How, then, can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix, 9)

"I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord the God of heaven." (Jonas, i, 9)

"Hear you, whoever you may be, that are in temporal service, and are bound by law to the dominion of another, in whatever condition

you find yourself, be a servant and be free; one is a servant by humbly obeying; one is free by faithfully serving." (S. Aug.)

III. SERVANTS SHOULD SERVE THEIR MASTERS FAITHFULLY

Fidelity is so much the mark of a good servant, that when we say: He is a faithful servant, we seem to say all that can be said. What is this fidelity? It is a zeal for the interest of your masters that will induce you not to do them any injury, nor to allow others to do so, either in their property, their person, or their reputation.

"A faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord hath appointed over his family." (Matth. xxiv, 45)

A servant ought to be reserved in his conversation, careful in the use of food, faithful in his work, in preserving the property of his master.

"Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, in all things pleasing, not gainsaying; not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Tit. ii, 9, 10)

"As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that sent him." (Prov. x, 26)

"While you are servant to man, think with confidence of God. Observe the commandments of God, always obey the will of God, expect from God the reward of a good will, guard the faith, avoid fraud, know that God will reward you for all your work." (S. Aug.)

A servant should not steal anything from his master, even as a matter of compensation or indemnity.

"Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way; I will also give to this last even as to thee." (Matth. xx, 13, 14)

But if you should faithfully guard the property of your masters, you should guard even more faithfully their honor and their reputation. Discretion is an essential point of fidelity. Say nothing to others of what passes in the house. If you observe faults, if there are quarrels, disunion between husband and wife, maintain a strict silence on all these matters. If you remark in your masters any ill-will against another family, if you hear anything in conversation on this subject, be very careful not to mention the matter to others. Be equally reserved with servants of other families.

Finally, keep a careful watch over children confided to your care. What a horrible crime it would be if you yourselves were the corrupters of their innocence! . . . "Wicked servant!"

"If you give good service to your masters, God will give you eternal freedom." (S. Aug.)

"Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been

faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. xxv, 23)

Divisions

I

1. The *fidelity of servants* consists not only in their not taking away the property of their masters, but also in managing matters with care and economy. They are wanting in fidelity to their masters when they do not avoid doing them wrong, when they do not defend their reputation, when they make known their masters' faults, or what takes place in the house, when they waste the time that should be employed in their masters' work.

2. They owe to their masters *obedience,* which should be respectful, prompt, entire, without arguing, without vexation, but with pleasure, remembering that in the person of their masters they are obeying God: "Serving the Lord," etc.

II

The *condition of servants* is very helpful to them in the work of their salvation,

1. Because they are in that condition by the will of God, who gives them all the graces necessary for their state;

2. Because their state is more in conformity with the life of Jesus Christ, who came on earth "to minister to others, not to be ministered to";

3. Because this state leads more directly to Heaven by humiliations, poverty, and labor.

XXXVII

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

DUTIES OF MASTERS TOWARDS THEIR SERVANTS

"Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven." (Col. iv, 1)

In society everything should be reciprocal. This is why S. Paul, after saying to servants: "Obey your masters," says to the latter: "And you, masters, do to your servants what is just and equal." . . . Masters ought therefore to discharge towards their servants: I. The duties of justice; II. The duties of charity; III. The duties of piety.

I. DUTIES OF JUSTICE

Masters discharge these duties by giving to their servants the food and wages due to them.

1. *Food*

If servants who engage in the service of a master, contract a strict obligation, which binds in conscience, to serve him, the master on his part is bound by the same contract to give them suitable food and to pay them adequate wages. To refuse them nourishing food while they are overwhelmed with work, is a sin not only against charity but also against justice.

"The workman is worthy of his meat." (Matth. x, 10)

"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn on the floor." (Deut. xxv, 4)

"Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." (1 Cor. ix, 9)

"He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbor." (Eccli. xxxiv, 26)

"Some one wishes to have many servants, but does not allow them to have even the necessary sustenance. Do you suppose, I ask, that these men are made of stone?" (S. Chrys.)

They should see that the servants work:

"Send him to work, that he be not idle; for idleness hath taught much evil." (Eccli. xxxiii, 28, 29)

But always in due moderation.

2. Wages

We do not generally find masters who absolutely refuse to give wages to their servants; but how many there are who defer the payment of such wages for a long time, and so cause inconvenience and suffering! How many there are who withhold part of their servants' wages under the false pretext that they have not been well served, or under the pretext of some loss which they unreasonably attribute to their servants! How many who, after having profited by the servants' work during a busy season, send them away for some light fault, and at a time when they cannot find a means of making a living.

"The laborer is worthy of his reward." (1 Tim. v, 18)

"The wages of him that hath been hired by thee shall not abide with thee until the morning." (Levit. xix, 13)

"Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor, whether he be thy brother, or a stranger; . . . but thou shalt pay him the price of his labor the same day, before the going down of the sun, because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life; lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to thee for a sin." (Deut. xxiv, 14, 15)

"If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all." (Tob. iv, 15)

"He that sheddeth blood and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire are brothers." (Eccli. xxxiv, 27)

"Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (Jas. v, 4)

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted." (*Ibid.* v, 1, 2)

II. DUTIES OF CHARITY

This virtue should induce masters to assist their servants when they are in need or sick. If we are obliged to help the poor from whom we have not received any service, much more is a master bound to help in their poverty the servants who have sacrificed their health in his service.

If your servants then are in poverty or sickness, you should reach out to them a helping hand, especially if a servant has lost his health through your having imposed too much work on him? It is no longer charity alone, but also justice which obliges you to assist him.

"If thou have a faithful servant, let him be to thee as thy own soul; treat him as a brother." (Eccli. xxxiii, 31)

"For he is our brother and our flesh." (Gen. xxxvii, 27)
"The just regardeth the lives of his beasts." (Prov. xii, 10)
And masters abandon their sick servants!
"The bowels of the wicked are cruel." (Prov. xii, 10)
Example of charity: the centurion.
"My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy." (Matth. viii, 6)
"He was dear to him." (Luke vii, 2)

This charity also obliges you to bear patiently with the faults of your servants; to treat them kindly and with mildness . . . It must be admitted that the lot of masters with certain servants is not to be envied; some servants are lazy and idle; others are of a violent temper that breaks out at the least word of correction; others are wanting in respect, or cause trouble and sorrow by spreading scandal. Very few serve their masters with affection. But what is to be done with them? To send them away when they deserve it, is what prudence suggests, and even religion demands in certain circumstances. But to be constantly changing servants is sometimes to incur greater trouble and inconvenience than those one wishes to avoid. Masters therefore have need of charity to enable them to bear with the faults and shortcomings of their servants.

Masters are bound to correct their servants; but in doing so they should carefully avoid using harsh and bitter words, or appearing to treat them as slaves. Remember that your servants are your brethren in the sight of God. Your position gives you the right to command them with authority, but not to insult them in your pride.

"Why is earth and ashes [the master] proud?" (Eccli. x, 9)
"Did not He that made me in the womb, make him also?" (Job xxxi, 15)
"He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the winds." (Prov. xi, 29)
"Be not as a lion in thy house terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee." (Eccli. iv, 35)
"For they are my servants . . . afflict them not by might, but fear thy God." (Levit. xxv, 42, 43)
"Let a wise servant be dear to thee as thy soul, defraud him not of liberty, nor leave him needy." (Eccli. vii, 23)
"And you, masters, do the same things to them, forbearing threatenings: knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven: and there is no respect of persons with him." (Ephes. vi, 9)
"Do thou receive him [Onesimus] . . . not now as a servant, but instead of a servant, a most dear brother." (Philem. iii, 12, 16)
"We must treat servants as we treat ourselves." (Isid. of Pelus.)

"When we are angry with our servants, let us consider our own sins." (S. Basil)

"You demand service from your servant, and you, a man, compel a man to obey you; and, miserable man, when you exercise this power, you refuse to acknowledge your Lord." (S. Cypr.)

"Even the worst servants, whom no punishments can correct, yield to kind words; and those whom the scourge cannot subdue, are conquered by kind deeds." (Salvian.)

III. DUTIES OF PIETY

Masters discharge these duties by inducing their domestics to serve God and to take care of their eternal salvation. Masters will have to account to God for the souls of their servants, if these souls are lost through their fault.

"For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Heb. xiii, 17)

Masters should instruct their servants, correct them when necessary, and give them a good example. They should occupy the place of parents towards their servants.

"If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v, 8)

"Masters, attend most carefully to the salvation of your servants." (S. Aug.)

"Those who are true heads of families take care that all others in the family, as well as their own children, worship God and deserve His blessing." (S. Aug.)

How great is the guilt of those masters who pay no more attention to the salvation of their servants than if these had no souls! Provided they themselves are well served, they never inquire whether their domestics serve God. They even go farther, and turn their servants away from the service of God, by not giving them time to say their prayers, to hear Mass, to receive the Sacraments. Do we not even find masters without religion who employ their servants in servile works on Sundays and holydays of obligation, without giving them time to perform their duties as Christians?

How many masters never correct their servants' faults! They are angry with a servant who does not attend punctually to his work, who neglects an animal; but they never say a word to their servants about their frequent relapses into sin, about their oaths, their debaucheries, their infidelity in the service of God. Under the pretext that a servant is necessary, useful, skilful, obliging, his master pardons everything, however vicious the servant may be.

But what is to be said of those masters who, not content with turning their domestics away from the service of God, persuade them to do what is contrary to His holy law, hurl them into the abyss of eternal ruin by giving them bad advice, bad example, by placing them in the occasion of sin, by making them accomplices in their own disorderly lives?

Masters should retain in their service those only whose conduct is irreproachable.

"The man that walked in the perfect ways, he served Me. He that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of My house; he that speaketh unjust things did not prosper before My eyes." (Ps. c, 6, 7)

David took those only "who were zealous for virtue, and free from every crime." (Theodoret.)

"Not as lording it, . . . but being made a pattern of the flock." (1 Pet. v, 3)

"Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ hath died?" (1 Cor. viii, 11)

"How great is the corruption of the servants there where the corruption of the masters is so great! For when the head is diseased, nothing else is healthy; nor can any member possibly perform its function where the principal does not stand firm." (Salvian)

"Nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matth. xviii, 7)

"They who do such things are worthy of death; and not only they who do them, but they also that consent to them that do them." (Rom. i, 32)

Divisions

I

1. With regard to the *soul;* masters should instruct their servants, or have them instructed, in the principles and truths of religion; they should send their servants to the instructions and the offices of the Church; should take care that they fulfil their religious duties; should not allow any bad conduct on their part; and should induce them by good example to practise virtue.

2. With regard to the *body;* masters should give their servants suitable nourishment, pay them their exact wages, should not overwhelm them with work, and should take an interest in their temporal welfare.

XXXVIII

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

DUTIES OF PASTORS AND PARISHIONERS

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me." (John x, 14)

The Fourth Commandment also regulates the duties of pastors towards their parishioners, and of parishioners towards their pastors. We will consider: I. The qualities of a good pastor and II. The qualities of a good parishioner.

I. THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD PASTOR

1. *Self-denial*

The mercenary pastor seeks his own advantage; the good pastor seeks only the salvation of his flock, and in this shows his disinterestedness.

"It behooveth a bishop [pastor] to be blameless." (Tim. iii, 2)

"By this one word, blameless, the Apostle expresses every kind of virtue." (S. Chrys.)

But self-denial is the virtue that is most necessary for the pastor who will work with profit for the salvation of souls. This is why the Apostle said:

"I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know." (Acts xx, 33)

"I seek not the things that are yours, but you." (2 Cor. xii, 14)

"Give me the persons, and the rest take to thyself." (Gen. xiv, 21)

A pastor should be able to say with Samuel:

"I am old and gray-headed! . . . Speak of me before the Lord . . . whether I have taken any man's ox or ass. If I have wronged any man; if I have oppressed any man; if I have taken a bribe at any man's hand." (1 Kings xii, 2, 3)

Samuel had his rights. God Himself had declared what should belong to the High Priest and to the inferior ministers. He had obliged the people to assist them with a portion of their goods; the portion of the priests was fixed and no one could take it from them without

sacrilege. But on the other hand the priests were to be content with these rights.

"They [pastors] shall not possess any other thing, but be content with oblations." (Num. xviii, 24)

"Do you not know that they who work in the sanctuary eat those things that belong to the sanctuary; and they who serve the altar share with the altar? So also the Lord has ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel. Therefore it is lawful to live by the altar, but not to live in luxury." (S. Bern.)

2. *Courage*

"The hireling . . . seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep; and the hireling flieth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep." (John x, 12, 13)

The mercenary pastor does not trouble himself about anything; he does not visit the sheep that are abandoned; he does not seek those that are lost. Let a parishioner be lost or saved, the hireling pastor does not trouble himself about the matter. He is a pastor in name only; he is an idler that abandons his flock.

"[The mercenary] shall not visit what is forsaken, nor seek what is scattered, nor heal what is broken, nor nourish that which standeth, and he shall eat the flesh of the fat ones, and break their hoofs. O shepherd and idol, that forsaketh the flock: the sword upon his arm and upon his right eye: his arm shall quite wither away, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." (Zach. xi, 16, 17)

But the good shepherd defends his sheep; he does not abandon them, even though he lose his life. Behold his courage.

"The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." (John x, 11). He attacks vice wherever he meets it; he will not suffer any disorder to exist in his parish without striving to apply a remedy to it . . . He is a man who is always armed with the sword of the word of God, to extirpate, as much as he can, crime and disorder from the midst of those whom God has committed to his care.

3. *Vigilance*

The mercenary pastor is never troubled about his sheep; but the good pastor knows them and keeps a watchful eye over them. Observe his vigilance.

"I know my sheep . . . He calls his own sheep by name. He goeth before them . . . Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice." (John x, 14, 16)

It would be a crying injustice to deprive pastors of that which they

are allowed by both divine and human laws; but it would be an injustice also if, living by the altar, pastors neglected to serve the altar, to instruct the people, to administer the sacraments. They would deserve the reproach:

"You ate the milk and you clothed yourselves with the wool, . . . but My flock you did not feed." (Ezech. xxxiv, 3)

"Woe to the shepherds of Israel that feed themselves: Should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds?" (*Ibid.*, 2)

"The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed; that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost; but you ruled over them with rigor and a high hand. And My sheep were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field . . . and there was none that sought them." (Ezech. xxxiv, 4–6)

"Woe to the pastors that destroy and tear the sheep of my pasture! . . . You have scattered My flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them." (Jer. xxiii, 1, 2)

"Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God." (Acts xx, 28)

"I left thee [Titus] in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting." (Tit. i, 5)

II. THE QUALITIES OF GOOD PARISHIONERS

Good parishioners, (1) know their pastor, (2) listen to his voice, (3) follow him.

1. *They know their pastor*

When a parishioner knows his pastor as he ought, he respects him, and honors him, because he sees in him the person of Jesus Christ.

"Mine know Me." (John x, 14)

"Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv, 1)

"For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us." (2 Cor. v, 20)

"Is Christ divided? Was Paul then crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. i, 13)

Properly speaking there is only one Pastor, one sovereign Pastor, in the Church, and this supreme Pastor is Jesus Christ, whom all pastors represent. This is so true that in all the functions of our ministry we speak and act in His name.

"For it is He [Christ] who baptizes and preaches." (S. Aug.)

"For it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matth. x, 20)

"When you see a priest offering [the holy Mass] think, not that it is a priest, but that it is the hand of Christ invisibly extended." (S. Chrys.)

Thus, when the priest consecrates, he does not say: This is the body of Jesus Christ; but, "this is My body." Why is this? Because the priest becomes, as it were, one with Christ, and Christ one with him, in such a way that both are in a sense only one and the same priest. What great veneration then should you not have for the ministers of Jesus Christ, and particularly for your pastors? You should consider them as vicars of the Saviour, and respect them, to a certain degree, as you would Christ Himself.

"Touch ye not My anointed: and do no evil to My prophets."(Ps. civ, 15)

"He that despises you, despises Me." (Luke x, 16)

If you notice faults in your pastors, pray for them, but do not cease to respect the sacred character with which they are clothed.

"Consider, not the merits of the persons, but the office of the priests." (S. Ambr.)

"Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." (1 Tim. v, 17)

"We should praise the life of that man who holds the priests of Christ in veneration, and who does not lower in the estimation of others the dignity of him by whom he has been made a Christian." (S. Jerome)

"God forbid that we should think any evil of those who, succeeding to the Apostolic dignity, by their word bring down from Heaven the body of Christ." (*Id.*)

"Truly worthy of veneration is the dignity of priests, in whose hands, as in the womb of His Mother, the Son of God becomes incarnate." (S. Aug.)

2. *They listen to his voice*

"They hear his voice." (John x, 3)

Pastors are bound to instruct the people.

"That he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers." (Tit. i, 9)

"Going teach ye all nations." (Matth. xxviii, 19)

Parishioners are bound to listen with docility and submission to their pastors, as to men sent by God to show them the way to Heaven.

"He who hears you hears Me." (Luke x, 16)

"The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not." (Matth. xxiii, 2, 3)

And yet people are often found who will not submit to the instructions and advice of their priests. How many times has not your pastor told you to change your life, to quit that occasion of sin, to become reconciled to God?

"For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v, 20)

But you have paid no attention to his charitable admonitions; you have often even turned them into mockery.

"They mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused the prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, and there was no remedy." (2 Paral. xxxvi, 16)

That certainly is not what a good parishioner should do. On the contrary, to treat one's pastor in this way is to despise God Himself and to reject His word.

"The Lord said to Samuel: They have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Kings viii, 7)

3. *They follow him and become attached to him*

"And the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of a stranger." (John x, 4, 5)

A good parishioner should be attached to his priest and his parish. Your priest is your pastor, and your parish is your fold. You should be united to your priest; you should frequent your own parish church. It is the duty of your pastor to distribute to you the bread of the word of God, to instruct you in His law, to explain to you the precepts of His Church, to administer the Sacraments to you; it is he who shall have to render an account of your souls to God. It is he whom you should obey in spiritual matters.

"Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Hebr. xiii, 17)

"Let the bishop diligently instruct the people that each one is bound to be present in his own parish church, when it can conveniently be done, at least on Sundays and greater feasts." (Council of Trent)

That is not a counsel, it is a duty from which no one can be dispensed without a sufficient reason.

"Honor God with all thy soul, and give honor to the priests." (Eccli. vii, 33)

"Bow thy head to a great man, but humble thy soul to the priest." (Eccli. iv, 7)

"Honor your priests as fathers, as masters, as benefactors, as authors of the good life." (Innoc. III)

Divisions

I

There are *three things to be considered in an ecclesiastic,* (1) his character, (2) his doctrine, (3) his life; or if you wish, his power, his preaching, and his conduct.

1. With regard to his *character,* it always demands great respect, because it is the seal of God Himself, by which the priest is made a partaker of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

2. His *doctrine* or *teaching* requires a humble and unquestioning submission, because this holy and righteous doctrine is the word of God, His law proclaimed to men, who should receive it with great attention and docility.

3. As regards his *life* or *conduct,* it demands neither the respect due to his sacred character, nor the submission due to his doctrine; because if it happens that his life is dissolute, instead of being an edifying example to men, it should be to them a matter of indifference and hatred: "According to their works do ye not." (Bourdaloue)

XXXIX

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

HOMICIDE

"Thou shalt not kill." (Exod. xx, 13)

The Fifth Commandment forbids the taking away of, and the wish to take away, the life of another by private authority, also the taking away of one's own life, or even the desire to do so. It forbids us to inflict, or to wish to inflict, any bodily injury on our neighbor, by unjustly wounding or striking him. It forbids hatred, envy, the desire of revenge, injuries. It also forbids us to injure our neighbor spiritually by inciting him to evil, by giving him bad example, scandal. I. It is forbidden to kill oneself or to wish to do so. II. It is forbidden to kill others by private authority. III. There are different ways of committing murder.

I. IT IS FORBIDDEN TO TAKE ONE'S OWN LIFE

Suicide is opposed to the natural law—to the good of society. It is an act of cowardice.

God alone is the Master of life and death.

"I will kill and I will make to live [saith the Lord]." (Deut. xxxii, 39)

"It is Thou, O Lord, that hast power of life and death." (Wis. xvi, 13)

Nevertheless, we may expose ourselves to death, and are sometimes obliged to do so, when the public good or charity requires it.

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv, 13)

It is equally forbidden to wish ourselves dead, unless such wish is caused by praiseworthy and holy motives, as for example, so as not to be longer exposed to the danger of offending God . . . to be more closely united to Him . . . to love Him more perfectly . . . So David, S. Paul.

"Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged." (Ps. cxix, 5)

"Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i, 23)

"Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii, 24)

"Come, Lord Jesus." (Apoc. xxii, 20). "Thy kingdom come."

"Ah! Lord, let me die that I may see Thee . . . I do not wish to live, I wish to die." (S. Aug.)

"Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace." (Luke, ii, 29)

II. IT IS FORBIDDEN TO TAKE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER BY PRIVATE AUTHORITY

God has given to the ruling powers the right to put criminals to death, so as to maintain good order in society.

"Wizards thou shalt not suffer to live." (Exod. xxii, 18)

"He [the prince] beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." (Rom. xiii, 4)

"In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land." (Ps. c, 8)

All laws, natural, divine, and human, forbid us to kill another, even though he be a villain, or an unjust aggressor. The only exception to this is the case in which a man can save his own life only by taking the life of his aggressor. Yet even when defending yourself, you must not use more violence than is necessary for your safety.

"[So understand:] if a thief be found breaking open a house or undermining it, and be wounded so as to die: he that slew him shall not be guilty of blood." (Exod. xxii, 2)

It is not permitted to kill in order to defend temporal goods.

"But if he [who wounds another] did this when the sun is risen, he hath committed murder." (Exod. xxii, 3)

Because he could then see that the robber came only to steal, and not to take life.

What an injury this crime does to God!—to the unhappy man who loses his life, the greatest of all temporal goods, and who perhaps loses his soul also!—to society—to the relatives of the dead man.

So the justice of God pursues the crime of murder even in this life . . . Remorse . . . fear . . .

"What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth." (Gen. iv, 10)

"Every one, therefore, that findeth me, shall kill me." (*Ibid.*, 14)

"Bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days." (Ps. liv, 24)

"The bloody and the deceitful man the Lord will abhor." (Ps. v, 7)

"All that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." (Matth. xxvi, 52)

"He that shall kill by the sword, must be killed by the sword." (Apoc. xiii, 10)

"Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed." (Gen. ix, 6)

"If a man kill his neighbor on set purpose, and by lying in wait for him, thou shalt take him away from My altar, that he may die." (Exod. xxi, 14)

III. DIFFERENT WAYS OF COMMITTING HOMICIDE

A man sins against the Fifth Commandment not only when he himself takes away the life of another, but also whenever he commands, advises, or incites another to commit that crime . . . Command . . . counsel . . . consent, etc. . . .

It is a crime to procure abortion.

"To prevent birth is anticipated homicide; nor does it make any difference whether one takes away a life already begun, or destroys one just beginning." (Tert.)

Those are indirectly guilty of suicide,

(1) who are addicted to intemperance.

"Gluttony hath slain more than the sword . . . Wine hath destroyed very many." (Eccli. xxxi, 30)

"By surfeiting many have perished." (Eccli. xxxvii, 34)

(2) Those who deliver themselves up to impurity.

"Mind not the deceit of a woman, . . . lest thou mourn at the last, when thou shalt have spent thy flesh and thy body." (Prov. v, 2, 11)

(3) Those who abandon themselves to passionate anger.

"Envy and anger shorten a man's days." (Eccli. xxx, 26)

Some render themselves guilty of homicide indirectly, such as,

(1) Pregnant women who act imprudently;

(2) Husbands who ill-treat their wives;

(3) Parents who allow their children of a tender age to sleep with themselves, or with others, on account of the danger of suffocation to which they expose such children.

This commandment forbids us also to wound or strike our neighbor.

"You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matth. v, 21, 22)

This commandment also forbids injurious words . . . imprecations . . . "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of

the council. And whosoever shall say: Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matth. v, 22)

He who has killed or maltreated others, should make reparation for all the injury he has caused.

On the other hand, the Fifth Commandment imposes on us the obligation of loving our neighbor, of assisting him in his spiritual and corporal necessities, of forgiving those who have offended us, of giving a good example.

"A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you." (John xiii, 34)

"Charity is patient, is kind, envieth not, etc." (1 Cor. xiii, 4)

XL

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

LOVE OF ENEMIES—FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

"Thou shalt not kill." (Exod. xx, 13)

Strictly speaking, the Fifth Commandment forbids homicide; but as Jesus Christ wishes to destroy the root and principle of this crime, He has forbidden us to hate our enemies; He has even given us the formal commandment to love them, and to forgive them if they injure us. I. There is nothing more urgent than the obligation to forgive injuries, to love our enemies; II. There is nothing more frivolous than the excuses which people bring forward to dispense themselves from this obligation.

I. THERE IS NOTHING MORE URGENT THAN THIS OBLIGATION

An obligation which is founded, (1) on a commandment given to us by God; (2) on the example of Jesus Christ; (3) for our own interest, should certainly be regarded as an urgent one. But such is the obligation of forgiving injuries, of loving our enemies.

1. *A commandment of God*

Yes, God has given us a commandment to love our enemies, a commandment the most indispensable, the most just, and the most useful to the welfare of society.

"But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matth. v, 44)

God has the observance of this precept so much at heart that He rejects every sacrifice which is not accompanied by love of our enemies and forgiveness of injuries.

"If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother has anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift. Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him." (Matth. v, 23–25)

"If I have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii, 3)

How deplorable is the blindness of a great number of people regarding this commandment! Apart from this they lead Christian lives, perform many good works, approach the sacraments regularly, but in their hearts they cherish feelings of bitterness and resentment towards their neighbors. Thus their prayers are rendered useless and their good works are spiritually unproductive.

"Love your enemies, . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to shine upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." (Matth. v, 44, 45)

"It is the duty of all to love their friends, but it is the duty of Christians only to love their enemies." (S. Cypr.)

"A Christian is not the enemy of any one." (Tert.)

"Since a Christian could not take revenge, he preferred to suffer." (S. Ambr.)

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, . . . lest thou incur sin through him." (Levit. xix, 17)

"Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens." (*Ibid.*, 18)

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (1 John iii, 15)

"He that rejoiceth at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished." (Prov. xvii, 5)

"When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice." (Prov. xxiv, 17)

"Say not: I will return evil; wait for the Lord, and He will deliver thee." (Prov. xx, 22)

"There is nothing that God detests so much as the man who eagerly longs for revenge, and who cherishes lasting enmity in his heart. The injury caused by this sin is so great that it turns aside the mercy of God lest the sinner should be pardoned." (S. Chrys.)

There is nothing more just than this commandment, since it comes from God, our sovereign Master; neither is there anything that is a better proof of the wisdom of His providence. For what would become of society if revenge were permitted! Oversensitive as we are and full of self-love, the world would be only a field of war, murder, and carnage. To what lengths would not the madness of revenge carry men!

2. The example of Christ

Jesus Christ taught us not only by words, but still more by example, to pardon injuries and to love our enemies. How did He avenge the outrages inflicted on Himself? . . . By benefits . . . He was unjustly accused . . . He did not speak.

"But Jesus held His peace." (Matth. xxvi, 63)

Oh! how eloquent is this silence of Christ! What a beautiful lesson for us! When we are treated with contempt, let us remember the silence of that Man of Sorrows, and do as He did . . . He pardoned His executioners, He even prayed for them.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii, 34)

"Wonderful thing! The Jews cried out: Crucify Him, and Christ cried out: Pardon them." (S. Bern.)

"Torn by scourges, crowned with thorns, pierced by nails, attached to the gibbet, yet forgetting all injuries: Forgive them, He says, for they know not what they do." (*Id.*)

Vindictive men, what do you say to that example? Is it not capable of suppressing the movements of revenge in your heart? Ah! do you still deserve the name of Christians and disciples of the God of mercies?

S. Stephen, when assailed by a shower of stones, prayed:

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii, 59)

See the multitude of martyrs who embraced their executioners, forgave them, and prayed for them. By this heroic charity they made known to the idolators the truth of our holy religion and converted many of them to Christ. Do you by this means give testimony to the truth of our holy religion to-day? Alas! would not your feelings of hatred, your revenge, your dissensions, be more likely to turn away those who might wish to embrace it?

3. *Our own interests*

To gain Heaven, we must obtain pardon of our sins; but it is only by pardoning our enemies that we ourselves shall receive pardon from God.

"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke vi, 37)

"If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences." (Matth. vi, 14, 15)

"With the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." (Luke vi, 38)

"Thou wicked servant, . . . shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (Matth. xviii, 32–35)

You have offended, outraged your God times beyond number; you ask Him every day to forgive you your sins; He will grant your petition, but only on condition that you yourself will forgive those who have offended you. You say:

"Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." (Matth. vi, 12)

"Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." (Luke xix, 22)

"Revenge is Mine, and I will repay them in due time [saith the Lord]." (Deut. xxxii, 35)

What are you thinking of, vindictive men, who refuse to be guided by a maxim so wise in itself, and so advantageous in its effects? You know that God will be merciful to you only as far as you will have been merciful towards others. Hence, renounce all hope of pardon and eternal salvation, do not any longer recite a prayer which you cannot repeat without pronouncing the sentence of your own condemnation.

"To no man rendering evil for evil . . . If it be possible as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii, 17–21)

"He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and He will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbor if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest. Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins? (Eccli. xxviii, 1–5)

"Justice without mercy to him that hath not done mercy." (Jas. ii, 13)

"If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you. He who does not rouse himself at these terrible words is not simply sleeping, he is dead." (S. Aug.)

"When you refuse mercy to your brother, you shut out the mercy of your Father." (S. Aug.)

"How can you have the audacity to say to the Lord: Forgive me the many sins I have committed,—if you do not forgive the few sins of your fellow-servants?" (S. Cyril)

"How can you enter into the peace of the Lord without peace?

How can you obtain the remission of sins while retaining them? How will hatred towards your brother please your Father?" (Tert.)

"He who is an enemy of his brother always lives in sin." (S. John Damascene)

"The love of enemies is the crown of goodness, the highest degree of piety, an example of divine philosophy." (S. Peter Chrys.)

"Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another. Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." (Col. iii, 13)

II. THERE IS NOTHING MORE FRIVOLOUS THAN THE PRETEXTS WHICH PEOPLE BRING FORWARD TO DISPENSE THEMSELVES FROM THIS OBLIGATION

1. Some allege the difficulty of pardoning an injury, especially when it is grievous. What! they say, love a person who hates us and injures us, who steals our property and tries to destroy our character! Ah! that is very hard, and who can conquer himself so as to do it?

"This is a hard saying . . . the Lord hath ordered, He hath ordered difficult things, but He hath promised a great reward." (S. Aug.)

The practice of this virtue is difficult, . . . but is there much merit in a thing in which we do no violence to ourselves? Moreover, is it not often more difficult to take revenge than to pardon? To pardon, nothing more is required than an act of the will; but what does it not cost to gratify our feelings of revenge, and to what do we not expose ourselves in so doing?

"We must understand that Christ commanded us to do, not what is impossible, but what is perfect, what David practised towards Saul and Absalom." (S. Aug.)

2. But, the vindictive man will say, there is a stain on my honor. What will people think of me? They will say I am a coward. Thus speaks passion, the world, and this language is only too often listened to while the warning of religion is despised. Which of these two should be obeyed, the language of passion demanding vengeance, or that of religion ordering pardon? To which should we listen, the world from which we have nothing to expect, or God, from whom we have all things to fear and all things to hope? . . . If the world will make you happy listen to it:

"If Baal be God, follow him." (3 Kings xviii, 21)

But in what does true honor consist? Is it not in doing the will of God, in fulfilling your duty as a Christian? Is it not this alone that will cause you to be esteemed by virtuous men? Is not this the esteem which you ought to seek?

"Following the example of God, it is more glorious to pass over an

injury in silence, than to overcome by answering." (S. Greg. Naz.)

But, you say, my honor is wounded, that enemy of mine has given me so bad a name in the world, that I dare not appear among men. May I not efface the bad impressions produced against me by his words? Yes, you can remove that stain that has blackened your good name; but how? Is it by revenge? No, since revenge is forbidden. You can use other means. For either you have given grounds for what has been said against you, or you have been calumniated. If you have given grounds for it, amend your conduct and close the mouth of your enemy. If you are innocent, people will end by acknowledging your innocence and taking your part.

May you have recourse to the civil law to clear your character? Yes, if it is necessary; but never let passion induce you to do so.

3. Others say: We must avenge ourselves, otherwise vice will increase with impunity, and the good of society demands that its progress should be stopped; an enemy will take advantage of this impunity to inflict fresh injuries.

Vice must be checked, no doubt; but how much it is to be feared that under this pretext people seek only to gratify their desire for revenge. An excellent means of correcting an enemy is to pardon him and to return him good for evil. He will be touched by kindness and will be converted.

"Revenge is Mine, and I will repay them in due time." (Deut. xxxii, 35)

"To love an enemy is a heavenly revenge." (S. Paulin.)

4. "I have already forgiven him several times; my enemy has not become better. Must I always pardon him?"

Listen to the words which Christ speaks to you:

"Till seventy times seven times." (Matth. xviii, 22)

"If I have rendered to them that repaid me evils, let me deservedly fall empty before my enemies. Let my enemy pursue my soul." (Ps. vii, 5, 6)

5. "It is not I who offended him first; it is not my place to make the first advance towards reconciliation. I will pardon my enemy if he acknowledges his fault." This is the usual language of those who do not wish to pardon. No one wishes to admit his fault, each pretends he has been offended. Pride prevents the carrying out of a work inspired by grace.

"What difference is there between the person offending and him who is offended, except that one is discovered in evil-doing sooner than the other?" (Tert.)

"To love our enemies is divine rather than human." (S. Bern.)

"A Christian is not permitted to hate any one." (S. Leo)

"What a crime is unwillingness to forgive, a crime which is not atoned for even by martyrdom." (S. Cypr.)

"When you multiply prayer, I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood." (Is. i, 15)

"Go first [therefore] to be reconciled to thy brother." (Matth. v, 24)

"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke vi, 37)

Divisions

I

Motives that should urge us to pardon injuries:

1. God commands it; He has the right to command it, as well as to punish if He is not obeyed.

2. God considers as done to Himself what we do to our fellow-men; hatred, revenge, and outrage against our enemies are directed against Him.

3. The injury we do ourselves: if we do not forgive others God will not forgive us.

II

Three classes of people who refuse to pardon:

1. The first say: "We cannot do it." They must be made to see that they can.

2. The second say: "We ought not to do it"; they plead custom, worldly maxims, their honor, the requirements and laws of their state of life. They must be made to see how foolish these excuses are, and how just and strict is the law of God.

3. The third say: "We do not wish to do so"; their obstinacy must be overcome by the example, the promises, and the threats of Jesus Christ.

III

Conditions that should accompany the pardon of injuries.

1. The pardon must be sincere; this is the place to speak of the illusions of those who believe they forgive, and do not.

2. The pardon must include all persons and all injuries.

3. The pardon must be prompt.

IV

The world tells us we must take revenge, and must not suffer any injury patiently. We must show clearly how injurious this maxim is to God, how pernicious to society, how unjust to individuals.

XLI

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

SCANDAL

"Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matth. xviii, 7)

It is a dreadful crime to deprive a man of the life of the body; but it is still more dreadful to deprive him of the life of the soul. Yet that is what the scandal-giver does. Consider: I. How injurious scandal is to God; II. How hurtful it is to man.

I. HOW INJURIOUS SCANDAL IS TO GOD

By scandal is meant all that can be the occasion of sin for our neighbor:—a word or act giving the occasion of a fall. To constitute scandal it is sufficient that the word, etc., has the appearance of evil. No direct intention is required, it is enough if it can be foreseen that scandal will arise from the word or act. And scandal may be given by omission.

What injury does the sin of scandal do to God?

1. Scandal deprives God of the honor due to Him by His creatures; 2. It destroys the plans of Jesus Christ for the salvation of man; 3. It makes man an imitator of the devil.

1. *It deprives God of the honor due to Him*

God made reasonable creatures that He might be glorified by their homage, and by the obedience they render to His infinite grandeur and His laws. But what does the scandal-giver do? By his lessons in iniquity, by his bad example, he causes others to sin. Ah! if it is a cowardly act not to declare ourselves on the side of God, not to oppose the outrages that are inflicted on Him, not to prevent evil when we can do so; what will it be to approve of evil by our conduct, to drag others into sin and vice? But that is what scandal-givers do when, by their impious conversation and bad example, they turn others away from the service of God, and by pernicious counsel induce them to commit evil.

"You have caused many to stumble at the law; therefore have I also made you contemptible . . . to all the people." (Malach. ii, 8, 9)

"If a man see him that hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols?" (1 Cor. viii, 10)

2. It destroys the plans of Jesus Christ for the salvation of man

The sin of scandal is opposed not only to the designs of the Creator, but also to those of the Redeemer, since it renders useless all that Christ has done for the salvation of man.

The object of all the sufferings of Christ has been to secure the salvation of mankind. "On account of our salvation He came down from Heaven."

The scandal-giver renders useless to the souls he perverts all the blood Christ shed for them. What an injury to the Saviour!

"Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ hath died?" (1 Cor. viii, 11)

"Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." (Rom. xiv, 15)

"And I [Jesus] said: I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength without cause, and in vain." (Is. xlix, 4)

"Now when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." (1 Cor. viii, 12)

"Think not that this loss concerns him only who is injured; it also affects Christ who was crucified for him." (S. Chrys.)

The scandal-giver makes on religion a war more dangerous than the persecutions of tyrants. The blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians. The scandal-giver does not employ the rigor of bodily tortures; he makes use of the bait of pleasures. This is what causes the Church to say:

"Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter." (Is. xxxviii, 17)

"Christ suffers a graver persecution from the man who by bad example perverts the souls He redeemeed, than from the Jew who caused His blood to flow." (S. Bern.)

What name, then, must be given to those enemies of the glory of God and the salvation of souls?

"Now there are become many antichrists" (1 John ii, 18)—that is to say, there are Christians who are unworthy of so beautiful a name, who do the work of Antichrist in advance by perverting souls.

"No one does more injury to the Church than he who has a name and office of sanctity, and yet gives a bad example; and the fault is spread more rapidly among those who imitate him, when the sinner is honored through reverence for his office." (S. Greg.)

Scandal-givers, do you understand the enormity of your crime? I

cannot repeat it too often: your work is the work of the devil. What is the occupation of the demon on this earth?

"He was a murderer from the beginning." (John, viii, 44)

"He goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. v, 8)

If the devil finds a man resisting his attacks, he employs scandal-givers who, not content with destroying their own souls, wish to have companions in their misery.

What then does the evil spirit do when he wishes to ensnare that young man who is leading a good life, that modest and pious girl who has preserved her innocence? He procures for him a vicious companion who leads him from the path of virtue. He sends to that young girl a libertine, who does not immediately tempt her to commit crime, but first gains her affection by flattering speeches, and afterwards causes her to fall into sin.

What will that spirit of discord do to separate friends, to cause trouble in a family?

"A passionate man kindleth strife, and a sinful man will trouble his friends, and bring in debate in the midst of them that are at peace." (Eccli. xxviii, 11)

"The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed; for he hath troubled many that were at peace." (*Ibid.*, 15)

"The devils look for instruments through which they may do their work." (Orig.)

II. HOW HURTFUL SCANDAL IS TO MAN

Other sins injure those who commit them; but scandal inflicts its murderous blows not only on those who give it, but also on those to whom it is given.

Scandal causes the spiritual death of those who are guilty of it; and what makes this death more melancholy is, (1) that this sin, being graver than others, will be punished more rigorously; and (2) that its results being often irreparable, the return to the life of grace is more difficult.

1. *This sin will be more rigorously punished*

As there are virtues of the first order for which God reserves more magnificent rewards, so there are sins of a greater malice, which He will punish by severer chastisements. Among those virtues are zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

"He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. v, 19)

"They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii, 3)

From this let us judge what chastisement must await those men of perdition who destroy the kingdom of God by their scandals, who cause the loss of souls.

"I will require his blood at thy hand." (Ezech. iii, 18)

"He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of scandals . . . Woe to the man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matth. xviii, 6, 7)

"He who lives an evil life in the sight of the people kills, as far as he can do so, the man who pays attention to him." (S. Aug.)

"He that deceiveth the just in a wicked way, shall fall in his own destruction." (Prov. xxviii, 10)

"He who sins openly is doubly guilty, because he acts and teaches; he sins himself and he persuades others to sin." (S. Isid.)

"If you have been the cause of perdition to others, you shall suffer greater punishment than those who have been ruined by you." (S. Chrys.)

The more souls then the scandal-giver will have destroyed, the more rigorous his punishment shall be.

2. *The consequences of scandal are often irreparable, and make return to the life of grace more difficult*

The scandal-giver finds his misery beginning even in this life by the extreme difficulty he experiences in repairing his scandals. How is he to efface the bad impressions he has made? That man whom he perverted has ruined others; the evil has become general; a whole parish is infected.

The life of grace surpasses all natural goods; and it is that life of which the scandal-giver robs his neighbor.

Scandal-givers, do you know what injury you inflict on your brother, when you rob him of the treasure of grace by the sin you cause him to commit? You deprive him of the friendship of God. You hurl him into hell! Alas! perhaps there are already in that pit some who have fallen into it through your fault, who cry out in the midst of torments: "I burn in these flames because I followed the bad example of that sinner; . . . cursed be the day I first knew and associated with him!"

Yes, scandal destroys a great number of souls every day; it is a plague that spreads with amazing rapidity. The source of many crimes and disorders in the world is to be found in scandal. People imitate bad example only too easily.

"A little leaven corrupteth the whole lump." (1 Cor. v, 6)

"He who gives scandal ruins many by dragging them down with himself." (S. Cypr.)

"A woman who was in the city a sinner, who not only was a sinner, but had caused the sin of the entire city." (S. Chrys.)

The sin of the scandal-giver who has been long years in hell, is continued in some manner on earth in the persons of those he perverted.

"Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses . . . are deserving of death as often as they give bad example to their servants." (S. Greg.)

"A master, in his sin, has as many followers as he has witnesses." (S. Aug.)

"Behold a woman meeteth him in harlot's attire, prepared to deceive souls, talkative and wandering, not bearing to be quiet . . . now abroad, now in the streets, now lying in wait near the corners." (Prov. vii, 10–12)

"Go not in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones; trust not thyself to a rugged way, lest thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul; and beware of thy own children, and take heed of them of thy household." (Eccli. xxxii, 25, 26)

"If a fire breaking out light upon thorns, and catch stacks of corn, or corn standing in the field, he that kindleth the fire shall make good the loss." (Exod. xxii, 6)

"If a man open a pit . . . and cover it not, and an ox or an ass fall into it, the owner of the pit shall pay the price of the beasts." (Exod. xxi, 33, 34)

Such, and even much greater still, is the responsibility that weighs on those who cause the ruin of souls.

An act indifferent in its nature, or even good in itself, may be the cause of scandal; charity commands us to abstain from such acts.

"If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother." (1 Cor. viii, 13)

"Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed." (2 Cor. vi, 3)

3. *Examples of scandal and its punishment*

"He [Moses] said to Aaron: what has this people done to thee, that thou shouldst bring upon them a most heinous sin?" (Exod. xxxii, 21)

"He [Jeroboam] made two golden calves, and said to them: Go ye up no more to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel. . . . He placed the one in Bethel and the other in Dan. And this thing became an oc-

casion of sin; for the people went to adore the calf as far as Dan." (3 Kings, xii, 28–30)

"Jeroboam came not back from his wicked way, but on the contrary, he made of the meanest of the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he filled his hand, and he was made a priest of the high places. And for this cause did the house of Jeroboam sin, and was cut off and destroyed from the face of the earth." (3 Kings, xiii, 33, 34)

"Because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die." (2 Kings, xii, 14)

S. Scripture says that the sin of the sons of Heli was very great (1 Kings, ii, 7) because they gave scandal to the people.

Beautiful was the example of Eleazar, who preferred to die rather than scandalize the young men by pretending to eat forbidden meats. (2 Mach. vi, 24)

The sin of scandal then is very injurious to God and very hurtful to man . . . you who have had the misfortune to give scandal earnestly ask God's pardon: "From the sins of others spare Thy servant," and as far as possible repair the evil you have done. Keep such a watch over your words and actions "that you may walk worthy of God." (Col. i, 10)

Do not forget these terrible words: "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matth. xviii, 7)

Edify your neighbor by your words and deeds:

"From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves." (1 Thess. v, 22). Shun the company of scandal-givers:

"Go behind Me, satan, thou art a scandal unto Me." (Matth. xvi, 23)

"Them that sin reprove before all; that the just also may have fear." (1 Tim. v, 20)

"Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou yield in judgment to the opinion of the most part, to stray from the truth." (Exod. xxiii, 2)

"Beware thou never join in friendship with the inhabitants of that land, which may be thy ruin." (Exod. xxxiv, 12)

"Walk not with an angry man, lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and take scandal to thy soul." (Prov. xxii, 24)

"If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." (Matth. v, 29)

"I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrines which you have learnt, and to avoid them." (Rom. xvi, 17)

Divisions

I

Unhappy is he who *causes scandal;* doubly miserable is he who *gives scandal* when he is specially bound to give *good example.*

1. Unhappy is the man who causes scandal: Why?

1°. Because in the sight of God he is the murderer of all the souls he scandalizes;

2°. Because he is charged before God with all the sins of which he has been the cause.

2. Doubly miserable is he who gives scandal when he is specially bound to give good example.

There is no one who is not bound to give good example; but there are some who are more specially bound than others, because of special duties. Such duties are:

1°. Those of parents towards their children;

2°. Of masters towards their servants;

3°. Of ministers of the altar towards the flock of Christ;

4°. Of those who by their profession are servants of God towards the public;

5°. Of the strong in faith, *i. e.,* Catholics, towards the weak, *i. e.,* our separated brethren.

II

1. *Frequent occurrence* of scandal. 2. *Enormity* of this sin.

1. Frequent occurrence of scandal.

1°. It reigns in all classes, in all conditions;

2°. It is very easily given, and is put an end to with very great difficulty.

3°. It is so much the more common because few persons believe themselves bound to avoid it.

2. Enormity of this sin.

1°. There is no greater outrage, nothing more opposed to Jesus Christ.

2°. Its heinousness is proved by the threats and maledictions fulminated against it.

XLII

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

IMPURITY

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Matth. xx, 14)

Among sins there is one so dangerous and so shameful that the Apostle S. Paul forbade the first Christians even to name it: "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints." (Eph. v, 3)

Nevertheless, this sin is so widespread and causes such havoc that the ministers of the Gospel must speak of it, and strive to inspire for it all the horror it deserves. After having placed ourselves under the protection of the most pure Virgin, we shall examine: I. The causes; II. The effects of the sin of impurity.

I. THE CAUSES OF IMPURITY

Impurity is so detestable a sin that we cannot be too amazed at seeing men regard it as a mere trifle, a pardonable weakness.

What! Has not God expressly forbidden it? "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Does not S. Paul formally declare that this sin excludes from the kingdom of heaven those who commit it: "No fornicator or unclean . . . hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v, 5)

"This is a heinous crime, and a most grievous iniquity. It is a fire that devoureth even to destruction, and rooteth up all things that spring." (Job xxxi, 11)

But speaking to Christians I shall not stop to prove to them that impurity is a transgression of the law of God; I shall strive only to show its chief causes, which are:

(1) The want of vigilance over one's heart and senses; (2) the many occasions of sin to which people expose themselves; (3) idleness.

1. *Want of vigilance over the senses*

Our senses are like windows through which death enters into our souls: "Death is come up through our windows." (Jer. ix, 12).

Whence came the fall of Dina, daughter of Jacob? That of David? People do not all at once plunge into disorders condemned by reason as well as by religion; but they give too much liberty to their senses; they wish to see all, to hear all. In this way the fatal poison of impurity is insinuated into a soul:

"Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood." (Jas. iii, 5)

People delight in reading immodest books and papers.

Avoid immoderate use of drink.

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury." (Eph. v, 18)

Avoid familiarities, too tender attachments, and everything that can cause them.

"I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job xxxi, 1)

"Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling-block to thee." (Eccli. ix, 5)

"Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not upon another's beauty. For many have perished in the beauty of a woman." (*Ibid.*, 8)

"Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matth. v, 28)

"Lust is fed on banquets, nourished on pleasures, kindled by wine, and inflamed by drunkenness." (S. Ambr.)

"Be not seduced: Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. xv, 33)

"Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth." (Eph. iv, 29)

"These men . . . shall perish in their corruption. . . . Having eyes full of adultery and of sin that ceaseth not." (*2* Pet. ii, 12, 14)

2. *Dangerous occasions*

If this sin enters into the soul by the senses even when the objects are distant, what will happen when circumstances contribute to bring them close to us? So the occasion has always been the saddest stumbling-block to chastity.

Whence arise so many disorders in youth, so many infidelities in the married state? Is it not from criminal intimacies, from suspected houses that are frequented, from visits, etc.?

"All these things are indications of chastity about to be ruined." (S. Jerome)

The occasions of this sin are: assemblies, night-walking, amusements, dances, plays, indecency in female dress. Even those apparently innocent interviews between young people who seek each other in marriage, interviews that are often criminal, in which, under pretence of getting to know each other, they often pass the limits of virtue and

modesty. Undoubtedly such young people should be allowed to see each other, but only rarely, prudently, and in the presence of their relatives. When they avoid the society of others, when they see each other at unreasonable hours, sin generally follows. But, alas! such safeguards are not acceptable to most people; and often,—shall I say it?—fathers and mothers favor only too much the wantonness of their children. Under the plea of establishing them in life, they allow the children to go where they please, day or night. Must we be astonished to see so great licentiousness among youth?

"Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and hearken not to her, lest thou perish by the force of her charms." (Eccli. ix, 14)

"For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire." (*Ibid.*, 9)

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"Can a man hide fire in his bosom and his garments not burn? Or can he walk upon coals and his feet not be burnt? So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife shall not be clean." (Prov. vi, 27–29)

"Fly if you would not perish." (S. Aug.)

3. *Idleness*

If idleness is the mother of all vices, it is especially the mother of impurity: "Idleness has taught much evil." (Eccli. xxxiii, 39)

This is proved by the experience of those who lead idle lives. How many bad thoughts pass through their mind! What sinful movements spring up in their heart! It is an unoccupied house in which the demon of impurity very soon finds an abode.

"Do some work, so that the devil may always find you occupied." (S. Jerome)

"Idleness now assails those whom wars did not subdue." (S. Ambr.)

Let us acknowledge, then, that, however violent may be the inclination of man for carnal pleasures, however strongly the devil may urge him to commit sin, he would never be conquered if he kept on his guard, if he kept a watch over himself, if he fled from the occasion of sin and from idleness. For these are the usual causes of that filthy vice which destroys so many victims.

"O luxury, thou art an infernal fire—whose material is gluttony, whose flame is pride, whose sparks are conversations, whose ashes is uncleanness, whose end is hell." (S. Jerome)

II. EFFECTS OF IMPURITY

(1) On the body, (2) on the soul.

1. *On the body*

Chastisements with which God has punished this sin even in this life: the deluge, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This shameful sin is diametrically opposed to the most essential interests of man; disgrace, confusion, infamy, are the lot of the voluptuous.

"Every woman that is a harlot shall be trodden upon as dung in the way." (Eccli. ix, 10)

"He that is an adulterer, for the folly of his heart shall destroy his own soul. He gathereth to himself shame and dishonor, and his reproach shall not be blotted out." (Prov. vi, 32, 33)

"She [the adulterous woman] shall leave her memory to be cursed, and her infamy shall not be blotted out." (Eccli. xxiii, 36)

Loss of fortune, of health, even of life . . . In fact, what is a man, who is the slave of this passion, not capable of doing? Is it necessary that he should spend everything he has to gratify this passion? Is it necessary that he should expose his health to danger from sleepless nights, from shameful diseases that shorten his life? There is nothing he will not suffer, nothing to which he will not expose himself.

"He wasted his substance living luxuriously." (Luke xv, 13)

"God delivered them up to shameful affections." (Rom. i, 26)

This sin is followed only by regrets, remorse of conscience, and anxiety. In the married state it produces disunion, divorces, jealousies, hatreds, quarrels, murders. We often see sad examples of this. Herodias, delivered up to infamous passions, demanded the head of the holy Baptist.

"O utter infamy of lust, which ruins the strength of both mind and body; a burning heat and a carelessness always precede it, sorrow and grief always follow it." (Hugh of S. Victor)

2. *Evils produced in the soul by this passion*

1°. Blindness of spirit; 2°. hardness of heart, and as a consequence, final impenitence and eternal reprobation.

1°. Blindness of spirit

The peculiar effect of impurity is to produce spiritual blindness in him who is addicted to it, because it extinguishes the lights of reason and faith. The voluptuous act like brute beasts, not like reasonable beings.

"He is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. xlviii, 13)

"The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand." (1 Cor. ii, 14)

"Fornication and sensuality destroy the mind and make a brute beast of a rational man." (S. Jerome)

The impure man loses sight of all that the law of God teaches him. He carries his blindness so far that he would wish his sin to be considered as something indifferent in itself, nay, even permitted, and he uses every effort to make others so regard it.

Why do we see so many libertines arguing, disputing, about the truths of religion, attacking them? Because their hearts are corrupted. They wish that there should be no religion, no avenging God.

"He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. xxxv, 4)

"They have not known nor understood; for their eyes are covered, that they may not see, and that they may not understand with their heart." (Is. xliv, 18)

"The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God." (Ps. xiii, 1)

"When a man begins to lead a dissolute life, he begins to fall away from the true faith." (S. Ambr.)

"Wine and women make wise men fall off . . . and he that joineth himself to harlots, will be wicked. Rottenness and worms shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a greater example, and his soul shall be taken away of the number." (Eccli. xix, 2, 3)

"It is certainly impossible to avoid wavering in the faith if you lead an impure life." (S. Chrys.)

2°. Hardness of heart.

From blindness of spirit the impure man falls into hardness of heart. He becomes insensible to the warnings of God; the truths of religion make no impression on him; he is deaf to the call of God.

"What would be capable of causing an impure man to abandon his evil life and return to God? Prayer? But he does not pray, or at least he does not pray as he should. The Sacraments? But he keeps away from them, or if he receives them, it is only to profane them; either he does not declare his sins in confession, or he has not a firm purpose of amendment. His frequent relapses are ample proof of this.

"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man . . . he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out . . . Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first." (Matth. xii, 43–45)

These relapses produce in him hardness of heart, hardness of heart leads to final impenitence, and final impenitence causes eternal damnation.

"From luxury are produced blindness of the understanding, inconsistency, self-love, hatred of God, love of this world, but horror and despair regarding the future life." (S. Greg.)

"Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness." (Eph. iv, 19)

"Sensual pleasure will not last, it will be succeeded by eternal damnation." (S. Greg.)

"The fornicator grows old, but sensual pleasure does not grow old with him; take away the children and among adults few are saved because of the sins of the flesh." (S. Remig.)

"Licentiousness is the mother of impenitence." (S. Cypr.)

"They will not set their thoughts to return to their God; for the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." (Os. v, 4)

"How great the iniquity and how lamentable the perversity that, for a pleasure which lasts but one moment, the sensual man should sell to the devil the soul which Christ redeemed by His blood!" (S. Aug.)

A careful watch must, therefore, be kept over the senses: "Lord, turn away my eyes that they may not see vanity;" the mind must be kept occupied, and the occasions of sin carefully avoided. The flesh must be chastened by fasting and mortification, recourse must be had to prayer, to the Sacraments, and to the intercession of the Mother of God.

"Destroy the enemy while he is weak. The cockle should be rooted out from the seed, lest it grow up." (S. Jerome)

"Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot?" (1 Cor. vi, 15)

"When any impure thought disturbs me, I fly to the wounds of Christ." (S. Aug.)

"When you are disturbed by lust, think of the fire of hell." (S. Bonav.)

"Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)

"When the mind is urged on to impure pleasures, let the fear of the divine judgments and the eternal torments be placed before the eyes, because all pain is undoubtedly conquered by the fear of a greater punishment." (S. Isid.)

"There is nothing more capable of subduing the lewdness of the flesh than the thought of what a man will be in death." (S. Bonav.)

Divisions

I

Impurity, 1. A sign of reprobation; 2. A cause of reprobation.

1. *A sign of reprobation.*

Because there is nothing in this life that gives us a better idea of the state of the damned souls. Four things indicate to us the state of the souls in hell; darkness, disorder, slavery, and the worm of conscience. But of all sins impurity is the one,

1°. That throws a man into a profound darkness of spirit by causing him to lose three kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of his own sin, and the knowledge of God;

2°. That plunges him into the most deadly disorders;

3°. That binds him most securely under the dominion of satan;

4°. That forms in his conscience a worm with the most bitter sting.

2. *The cause of reprobation.*

This vice leads to final impenitence.

1°. There is no sin that renders a sinner more liable to relapse;

2°. There is no sin that exposes the sinner more to the temptation of despair;

3°. There is no sin that holds the sinner more tightly bound by habit.

II

1. The *sad effects* of impurity. 2. The *difficulty of conversion* from this sin.

1. Effects.

1°. It causes dishonor;

2°. It robs the impure man of his property;

3°. It causes the loss of his soul.

2. Difficulty of conversion from this sin.

1°. There is no vice that removes the soul farther from God;

2°. There is no vice that is more opposed to the conversion of the sinner.

III

Of all vices impurity is that,

1. The occasions of which most frequently occur; they must be avoided;

2. The ravages of which are most dreadful: they must be feared;

3. The remedies for which are most difficult: they must be sought for.

IV

Examples and punishments.

David, for having cast a glance too full of curiosity, fell into the greatest crimes, which caused numerous evils . . . Solomon, Samson.

Chastisements which God inflicted on the infamous old men who attacked the chaste Susanna . . . Heavenly protection for pure souls.

Models of chastity: the holy Patriarch Joseph; S. Thomas Aquinas; S. Bernardine of Siena; S. Aloysius.

XLIII

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

AVOIDING DANGEROUS OCCASIONS

"He that loves the danger shall perish therein." (Eccli. iii, 27)

Flight from the world is one of the most powerful means of sanctification. This is what S. John the Baptist taught us when he withdrew into the desert.

If we do not fly from the world, we should at least avoid the dangerous occasions that are met with at every step, and that are always opposed to our sanctification.

Danger in the occasion of sin: I. It is often a sin to expose oneself to it without need; II. It is at least usually the cause of sin.

I. IT IS OFTEN A SIN TO EXPOSE ONESELF TO THE OCCASION OF SIN WITHOUT NEED

By an occasion of sin is meant every person, place or thing that, as a rule, is the means of leading us into sin if we go in quest of it; and I say that to expose ourselves to such danger without need is to desire our own destruction. "He who loves the danger shall perish in it." That is the general principle. But I do not mean to say that every occasion is a sin. When, then, is the occasion sinful in itself and when is it not?

The occasion of sin is sinful in itself, (1) when it is voluntary, (2) when it is proximate, (3) when it is proximate, more especially with regard to us.

1. *When it is voluntary*

There are occasions that are involuntary, *e. g.*, those that arise from circumstances independent of our will, and which we cannot avoid. Such was that in which the chaste Susanna found herself.

2. *When it is proximate*

There are occasions that are remote. Such are those that are not closely connected with the sin, and in which we can by the help of grace preserve ourselves from falling. It is not exactly a sin to ex-

pose oneself to such occasions: "Otherwise you must needs go out of this world." (1 Cor. v, 10)

A proximate occasion is that which so excites one to commit the sin that when a man exposes himself to it, he rarely escapes falling. To expose oneself to such an occasion is in itself a sin deserving of chastisement and of the refusal of absolution.

3. *When it is proximate, especially with regard to us*

The occasion may be remote in itself, though it may be proximate and dangerous to an individual because of weakness or habit.

All admit these principles; but very few are willing to apply them to their own individual conduct. They persuade themselves,

1°. that an occasion is necessary when it is entirely voluntary;

2°. that it is remote when in reality it is proximate and personal.

1°. What is more common than to hear people excuse themselves for going into the occasion of sin by alleging some pretended necessity for their doing so? "I am young . . . I must go to that place . . . I must have recreation . . . I am engaged in a business that obliges me to do such things. . . ."

You are young, but what necessity compels you to associate with libertines,—to read those dangerous books,—to frequent dance-halls? Your business is a difficult one; but what compels you to interfere in matters that are outside your duties? What necessity forces you to keep a public-house? S. Charles says that people should not remain in such employments when experience shows them that they cannot do so without exposing themselves to the danger of eternal damnation.

"If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." (Matth. v, 29)

"By this occasion your children shall turn away our children from the fear of the Lord." (Jos. xxii, 25)

"Thou forsakest not them that trust in Thee, and Thou humblest them that presume of themselves, and that glory in their own strength." (Judith vi, 15)

"In his presumption S. Peter was ignorant of his own strength, but he gained a knowledge of it in his denial." (S. Aug.)

"Why should you remain in that house where each day you must of necessity either perish or conquer?" (S. Jerome.)

2°. Another illusion is to believe an occasion to be remote when in reality it is proximate. What! You do not call these secret meetings, these free and familiar conversations, this company-keeping, proximate occasions of sin! You deceive yourself:

"Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." (2 Cor. vi, 17)

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

"It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." (Matth. xviii, 8)

Yes, if that person is as dear to you as your right eye, if this profession, this employment, is as necessary to you as your foot or your hand, yet if they are an occasion of sin for you, you must separate yourself from them, you must quit them. There is question of the salvation of your soul.

"Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins." (Numb. xvi, 26)

"Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her." (Is. lii, 11)

"Flee, save your lives." (Jer. xlviii, 6)

"Flee ye from the midst of Babylon." (*Ibid.* li, 6)

"It is a deceitful hope which causes the sinner to think he can save his soul in the midst of that which nourishes sin." (S. Aug.)

II. THE DANGEROUS OCCASION IS AT LEAST THE USUAL CAUSE OF SIN

Without distinguishing here the proximate occasion from that which is remote, it can be said that it is always the cause of sin when people expose themselves to it without sufficient reason, and remain in it without precaution; and this in two ways:

1. The one by way of temptation; 2. the other because of the withdrawal of grace.

1. *We are never more strongly tempted, more dangerously disposed to sin, than when in the occasion of sin*

Nothing excites the passion more than the presence of the object, because only one step is necessary to bring us to commit the sin, and we are almost certain to take that step, especially when our natural inclination draws us that way. If then to this natural inclination we add the dangerous occasion, we shall not restrain ourselves long, and shall soon take that fatal step that leads to the precipice . . . Example of our first parents; the serpent, figure of the occasion, presents himself to Eve:

"Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" (Gen. iii, 1)

"And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the

eyes, and delightful to behold, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (*Ibid.*, 6)

Eve became the occasion of sin for Adam: "And she gave to her husband, who did eat." (*Ibid.*)

Ah! if I put to many people the question God put to those first criminals: "Where art thou? . . . Why hast thou done this?" would they not answer: "The occasion deceived me. The serpent deceived me . . . The woman Thou gavest to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Into what sacrileges, what profanation, what debauchery have you fallen? You, a woman who until now have led so good a life? You, a young girl, formerly so reserved, so modest? "Where art thou?" "How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed!" (Lament. iv, 1). "Ah! the occasion dragged me on," you say; "the serpent deceived me." But in the sight of God are these lawful excuses? Should you not have distrusted your own weakness and strengthened yourself against the occasion? Could you not have done so?

"Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice?" (2 Cor. vi, 14)

"Go out from her [Babylon], my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." (Apoc. xviii, 4)

"You will not remain long uninjured when placed near the serpent." (S. Isid.)

"He who walks close to a precipice, although he may not fall into it, yet trembles, and very often, seized by fear, falls down. In like manner, he who, instead of flying from sin, remains near it, lives in fear and falls into sin frequently." (S. Chrys.)

2. *Because of the withdrawal of grace*

God usually refuses to give grace to him who, with rash presumption, exposes himself to the occasion of sin. If because of your position, or through necessity, you are exposed to this occasion, God will protect you. But if you voluntarily expose yourself to the danger, do not expect His help.

"Who will pity an enchanter struck by a serpent, or any that come near wild beasts?" (Eccli. xii, 13)

That is the position of those who rashly place themselves in the occasion of sin.

"So is it with him that keepeth company with a wicked man, and is involved in his sins." (*Ibid.*)

Those who rashly place themselves in danger are abandoned by God. He will permit the sinner to fall into sins that will fill him with shame. He will allow the just man to be perverted and to become a criminal,

because both are equally culpable for not having feared the occasion of sin, for having exposed themselves to it without reason, or for having remained in it without taking the necessary precautions. Dreadful but just chastisement of God!

"He who acts presumptuously has less fear, is less careful, is more exposed to danger." (Tert.)

"The whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 John v, 19)

"As often as I have been among men, I returned less a man." (*Imit.*, B. I, c. 20)

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12)

"He that is aware of the snares, shall be secure." (Prov. xi, 15)

"Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent." (Eccli. xxi, 2)

"Fly from the occasion of sin if you would gain the victory." (S. Aug.)

"He who does not wish to fly from danger, wishes to perish." (*Id.*)

"If your whole house was on fire, and you saw that you would be burned alive unless you dashed out and abandoned all, would you not at once leave the house and everything in it, and save your life? Act in like manner when your soul is in danger, that you may save it and yourself from burning in the fire of hell. But if you will not do so: Your perdition is your own." (Dens, *De Paen.*, n. 135)

"If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you." (1 Kings vii, 3)

"Depart from the unjust, and evils shall depart from thee." (Eccli. vii, 2)

"Let every man cast away the scandals of his eyes." (Ezech. xx, 7)

"Such of them as shall flee shall escape; and they shall be in the mountains like doves of the valley, all of them trembling." (Ezech. vii, 16)

Divisions

I

Three things commonly induce men to place themselves in the occasion of sin:

1. *Wicked counsels;* these must not be followed, however trustworthy and plausible they may seem.

2. *Confidence in their own strength*: however well-founded this

confidence may appear, they must mistrust themselves and fear the occasion.

3. *Love of worldly interests.* "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

II

We easily fall when in the occasion of sin,

1. because of our own *weakness;*

2. because of the *power* which our *enemies* have over us when we expose ourselves to the occasion, since we are already half-conquered by the passion that makes us face the danger;

3. because of the *justice of God,* who abandons those that expose themselves to dangerous occasions.

III

The just should *fly from the occasions of sin* in order that they may remain strong;—sinners, in order to regain strength.

Examples: Eve, David, Solomon, Samson, fell into sin because they exposed themselves to dangerous occasions.

In order to avoid falling into sin, Tobias "alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel." (Tob. i, 5, 6)

S. Peter denied Jesus Christ because, presuming on his own strength, he exposed himself to the occasion of sin.

XLIV

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

ON AVOIDING BAD COMPANY

"Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Ps. vi, 9)

In this world the wicked are mingled with the just. The just must bear with them; but for how long?

"The good endure the wicked, until in the end they are separated." (S. Aug.)

We should pray that God may convert them; but we should avoid their company as much as possible.

"My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say: Come with us . . . Cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse. My son, walk not with them, restrain thy foot from their paths. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood." (Prov. i, 10–16)

I cannot propose to you anything more useful than this advice of the wise man, which you should follow, whether you be just or sinners. I. Those who are free from sin must avoid bad company if they wish to persevere in virtue. II. Sinners must avoid bad company if they wish to withdraw from sin and return to God.

I. THOSE WHO ARE JUST MUST AVOID BAD COMPANY IF THEY WISH TO PERSEVERE IN VIRTUE

1. *God is holy at all times and in all places.*

"The Lord is faithful in all His words; and holy in all His works." (Ps. cxliv, 13)

"But Thou dwellest in the holy place, the praise of Israel." (Ps. xxi, 4)

It is not so with man: he can hardly go abroad without suffering a loss of virtue: "As often as I have been among men I have returned less a man." (*Imit.*) Thus, however free from sin we believe ourselves to be, we should always fear the corruption that reigns in the world, and above all, we should avoid taking pleasure in the company of the wicked.

"Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee." (Prov. iv, 14)

Why? Because with the wicked, (1) You will usually not do the good you should do; (2) You will often do the evil you should avoid.

"He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise: a friend of fools shall become like to them." (Prov. xiii, 20)

If it is true that he who walks with the wise shall himself become wise, it is still truer that the friend of sinners shall become like to them; because we have no need of a master to teach us evil: corrupt nature entices us to it. What will happen, then, if we join the company of the wicked? We shall soon become accustomed to live as they live; or at least, we shall not do the good we should do.

Remember the case of Josaphat. He was a pious king; but he tarnished the lustre of his glory by forming an alliance with Achab, King of Israel, who was an impious man. The Prophet Jehu reproved him:

"Thou helpest the ungodly, and thou art joined in friendship with them that hate the Lord." (2 Paral. xix, 2)

It is, then, very dangerous to be found in the company of the wicked. If you try to correct them, they will mock you:

"I became a by-word to them, . . . and they that drank wine made me their song." (Ps. lxviii, 12)

"Salvation is far from sinners; because they have not sought Thy justification." (Ps. cxviii, 155)

"Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins." (Num. xvi, 26)

"Beware thou never join in friendship with the inhabitants of that land, which may be thy ruin." (Exod. xxxiv, 12)

"To be associated with the just is profitable both for instruction and as a proof of virtue." (S. Ambr.)

"Young people show that they imitate those with whom they associate. It may be taken for granted that their manner of life will be formed on the lives of those with whom they associate." (S. Ambr.)

"As bad air, constantly breathed, corrupts the body, so evil conversation, frequently heard, corrupts the souls of the weak; and from taking pleasure in bad conversation they soon come to take delight in evil deeds." (S. Greg.)

"The good man is so connected with him who is wicked, that they are either rendered similar, or are soon separated; for friendship either seeks or makes equals." (S. Chrys.)

"It is of the nature of things that as often as a just man is joined

to a sinner, the sinner is not improved by the just, but the just is contaminated by the sinner." (*Id.*)

"It is better to detest the wicked than to associate with them. Just as the community life of saints confers many benefits, so the society of the wicked causes many evils." (S. Isid.)

God suffers the wicked to exist.

"Think not that the wicked are in this world for nothing, and that God does no good by them: every sinner lives either that he may be converted, or that a just man may be exercised through him." (S. Aug.)

"To be good in the company of virtuous persons is easy enough, but to be good in the society of the wicked is a proof of heroic virtue. In the one case your reward will be in proportion to your security; in the other, your virtue and merit will be measured in proportion to the difficulty you had to contend with." (S. Bern.)

"Those who can persevere in virtue when in the society of the wicked are really good." (S. Greg.)

2. *In the company of sinners not only will you not do what is good, but you will very often imitate the evil you see them do*

There are in the world two great societies that make unceasing war against each other: the society of the good and that of the wicked.

"The sinner shall watch the just man; and shall gnash upon him with his teeth." (Ps. xxxvi, 12)

"That he may make him a sinner." (S. Aug.)

"The wicked have drawn out the sword . . . to kill the upright of heart." (Ps. xxxvi, 14)

"The just abhor a wicked man; and the wicked loathe them that are in the right way." (Prov. xxix, 27)

"What participation hath justice with injustice? or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi, 14, 15)

"Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man; lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and take scandal to thy soul." (Prov. xxii, 24, 25)

"He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride." (Eccli. xiii, 1)

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. xv, 33)

"The example of evil men is infectious; and you quickly imitate the vices of those whose virtues you cannot acquire." (S. Jerome)

What must be done, then? Avoid them. That is what S. Paul commands:

"I wrote to you . . . not to keep company with fornicators . . .

If any man that is named a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, . . . with such an one not so much as to eat . . . Put away the evil one from among yourselves." (1 Cor. v, 9, 11, 13)

"Know you not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump?" (*Ibid.*, 6)

The Apostle believed this advice to be so necessary that he repeated it to the Thessalonians:

"We charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly." (2 Thess. iii, 6)

Up to the present you have been prudent, chaste, modest; but that libertine whom you are looking at does not possess these qualities: his language and conduct are capable of causing you to lose your treasure of grace and purity; you must avoid him. But, you say, he is my neighbor, my relative. No matter. Remember you cannot too carefully avoid the infected atmosphere of this world, if you would keep yourself in the grace of God.

"The perverse heart did not cleave to Me; and the malignant, that turned aside from Me, I would not know. The man that in private detracted his neighbor, him did I persecute. With him that had a proud eye and an insatiable heart, I would not eat." (Ps. c, 4, 5)

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 John v, 19)

The Jews were the people of God; He had worked innumerable miracles in their favor; nevertheless they forgot all, because

"They were mingled among the heathens, and learned their works; and served their idols, and it became a stumbling-block to them." (Ps. cv, 35, 36)

"I have not sat with the council of vanity; neither will I go in with the doers of unjust things." (Ps. xxv, 4)

"Depart from me, ye malignant." (Ps. cxviii, 115)

"I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away . . . My zeal hath made me pine away." (Ps. cxviii, 118, 139)

"Contend not with the wicked, nor seek to be like the ungodly." (Prov. xxiv, 19)

"Go out from her, My people; that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." (Apoc. xviii, 4)

"Why should you remain in that house in which you must of necessity either perish altogether or fall away? What sane man would think of sleeping in safety beside a deadly serpent?" (S. Jerome)

"Have for your advisers and the witnesses of your life and honor, persons who are wise in council, obedient to authority, and faithful to their friends and companions." (S. Bern.)

II. SINNERS MUST AVOID BAD COMPANY IF THEY WISH TO GIVE UP SIN AND RETURN TO GOD

Bad company is an obstacle to conversion; and this for two reasons: (1) Because it drives them away from the practice of virtue; (2) because it makes them plunge more deeply into crime.

1. *It drives them away from the practise of virtue*

Sinners, do you wish to return to God?

"Depart from the unjust, and evils shall depart from thee." (Eccli. vii, 2)

Do you wish to become chaste? Avoid that impure companion. Do you desire to lead a more regular life? Do not be found any more in the company of that drunkard, who has so often caused you to spend Sundays and holidays in debauchery, quarrelling, and gambling. That is how you must begin if you seriously desire to return to God.

"I have restrained my feet from every evil way; that I may keep Thy words." (Ps. cxviii, 101)

That is what David did. You are in the same position as that holy King:

"Many dogs have encompassed me." (Ps. xxi, 17)

"Dogs barking, not in favor of truth, but through custom." (S. Aug.)

"Do not believe," they say, "all that is preached. If you are so timid, people will laugh at you."

Beware of this treacherous language. Sinners have no other object in view than to remove the fear of God from your heart, that they may more easily lead you into sin.

"You should avoid the company of the wicked, lest, if they do not amend their lives, they induce you to imitate their bad example; and when they themselves are not changed, they may pervert those who are in their society." (S. Greg.)

2. *It makes them plunge more deeply into crime*

If you do not give up bad company, you will be drawn more and more into evil. The more bad examples you see, the more familiar you become with sins you should avoid. Evil is done through complacency:

"When it is said: Let us go, let us do it, the immodest person does not feel any shame." (S. Aug.)

People sometimes come to that state where they are ashamed of not being as wicked as others:

"They took pleasure in doing evil, not only in the lust of the deed, but even in that of the praise [of their bad companions]." (S. Aug.)

"I was plunging headlong so blindly, that when I heard my contemporaries boasting of their crimes and glorying all the more, the more infamous they were, I felt ashamed at having committed sins less disgraceful than theirs." (S. Aug.)

"Behold the kind of companions with whom I used to walk the streets of Babylon. I wallowed in the sink of that wretched city as if my way lay among flowers and precious ointments!" (S. Aug.)

Is not this what many young people do?

Are there found many whose conduct resembles that of Tobias:

"He alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel . . . When all ate of the meats of the Gentiles he kept his soul, and never was defiled with their meats." (Tob. i, 5, 6, 12)

Have you acted in a like manner?

How many times, on the contrary, has not bad company made you break the fast or the abstinence, or miss Mass?

"Your assemblies are wicked." (Is. i, 13)

Tell me your company, and I will tell you what you are.

"Every man shall associate himself to his like." (Eccli. xiii, 20)

"Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her." (Is. lii, 11)

"Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence." (Ps. i, 1)

Remark the order of these words: Walked, stood, sat. Happy is he who can avoid bad companions, "who has not walked"; but since bad companions cannot be avoided at all times, happy is he who does not unite with them, "who hath not stood"; happier still is he who does not willingly associate with them or adopt their maxims;—"who hath not sat."

"There is no salvation except in the society of God." (S. Aug.)

"Be continually with a holy man, whomsoever thou shalt know to observe the fear of God." (Eccli. xxxvii, 15)

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. v, 11)

"Do not keep company with him [the disobedient man], that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. iii, 14)

"Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matth. xviii, 20)

Divisions

I

There are *three things* that usually cause us to *frequent the company of the wicked,* and these things impose on us three kinds of obligations:

1. Our own *inclination* induces us to go into such company; and because of this we are under an indispensable obligation to avoid such companions, and to leave them as soon as possible, whenever we find ourselves in their midst, lest we imitate them and become like them.

2. *Necessity;* when we are forced to it by our state or position. In this case we should be careful to profit by the company even of the wicked, by bearing patiently their mockeries, etc., by strengthening ourselves in our hatred of vice, at the sight of the evils it causes and of the disagreeable sensations it produces in us.

3. *Charity* sometimes induces us to go into the company of the wicked: then we should strive by our example and advice to bring them back to God.

II

A person should avoid bad company, because in frequenting it:

1. He becomes *perverted,* if he is innocent;

2. He becomes *confirmed* in his disorders, if he has already begun to lead a sinful life;

3. He exposes himself to the same end and incurs the same *dangers,* as the wicked with whom he associates.

III

It is particularly dangerous for young people to keep bad company:

1. Because that age is susceptible to all bad impressions;

2. Because it is not easy to withdraw young people from this danger when their habits are once formed;

3. Because they naturally imitate what is evil rather than what is good; and because the first impressions they receive from bad companions remain with them during life.

XLV

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

DANCES AND BALLS

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

Among the proximate occasions of sin the most dangerous are dances and balls.

I know all I undertake in speaking against these amusements, but I know also that God has not charged me with the ministry of the word in order that I might treat sinners gently to the danger of their salvation and my own. I. Dances and balls are proximate occasions of sin that often lead to eternal reprobation. II. The reasons brought forward to justify them are very frivolous.

I. DANCES AND BALLS ARE PROXIMATE OCCASIONS OF SIN THAT OFTEN LEAD TO ETERNAL REPROBATION

Confessors should defer absolution to those who are unwilling to abandon the proximate occasions of mortal sin. But dances and balls are generally the rocks on which virtue is wrecked, the tomb of modesty, and the triumph of all the passions. This is proved by Holy Scripture, by tradition, and by reason.

1. *S. Scripture* does not speak of dances and balls at the marriage of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, but only of prayers.

Sara, the wife of young Tobias, wishing to justify herself before God, spoke these words: "Never have I joined myself with them that play; neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness." (Tob. iii, 17)

"I sat not in the assembly of jesters." (Jer. xv, 17)

"Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and harken not to her, lest perhaps thou perish by the force of her charms." (Eccli. ix, 4)

"They have . . . angered Me with their vanities." (Deut. xxxii, 21)

"The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." (Exod. xxxii, 6)

"When he [Moses] came nigh to the camp, he saw the calf and the dances; and being very angry, he threw the tables out of his hand." (Exod. xxxii, 19)

"On Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced . . . and pleased Herod." (Matth. xiv, 6)

2. *The Holy Fathers.*

S. Ephrem says: "Where music and dancing are, there are blindness of men, ruin of women, sadness of the angels, and the feast of devils." Then he adds: "He who taught the worship of idols taught also indulgence in pleasure."

The Israelites danced before the golden calf.

"What modesty can there be where dancing is?" (S. Ambr.)

"Let the daughter of an adulteress dance," says the same saint, "but a chaste and modest mother should teach her children religion and not dancing."

He calls the dance an assembly of the dissolute.

"It is better to plough on the Lord's Day than to take part in dancing." (S. Aug.)

"He who would jest with the devil cannot rejoice with Christ." (S. Pet. Chrysol.)

"If a chaste woman by chance take part in a dance, she returns from it unchaste." (S. Cypr.)

"Whatever is said and done there partakes of the pomp of Satan." (S. Chrys.)

"Dancing is the ruin of all virtue." (S. Chrys.)

"These public dances are the chief incentives to vice, and are a powerful weapon for the corruption of souls." (Lact.)

S. Charles Borromeo says: "Who can persuade himself that in a circle of which the devil is the centre, and the other rebel angels are the circumference, he will not be moved, and will preserve his innocence?"

3. Various *Church councils* have forbidden dancing. That of Laodicea, in 364, that of Constantinople, in 691, eight councils of France, etc. The Council of Aix-la-Chapelle calls dances infamous actions, unworthy of a Christian.

4. *Reason.* In other occasions of sin one is not solicited to evil by all the senses at the same time, but in dances and balls young people are attacked by all that can give an entrance to sensual pleasure—eyes, ears, the imagination, familiarity between young people of different sexes, etc. What is the result? Licentiousness, disgrace brought on families. Should it not be said that places where balls are held are like places of public debauchery, in which fathers and mothers deliver up their daughters to the pleasure of evil-minded and dissolute men?

What dangers are incurred in going to balls, in returning from them in the darkness of night! Experience will give the answer. It is

certain that dances and balls have at all times been most injurious to good morals.

Those who co-operate in organizing a ball, by so doing share in all the sins of which it is the occasion.

II. THE REASONS GIVEN TO JUSTIFY BALLS AND DANCES ARE VERY FRIVOLOUS

On the day of judgment these reasons and pretexts will be examined at the tribunal of Jesus Christ; but while awaiting that awful judgment let us examine them in detail.

1. "Religion," it is said, "permits amusements." Yes, if they are modest, but not if they are dangerous, and I have proved to you that balls and dances are full of danger. Religion does not forbid us to rejoice; but it wishes us to rejoice in the Lord. *"Gaudete in Domino."* But do people rejoice in and with the Lord at dances and balls? You would be shocked at seeing there persons consecrated to God by state and profession,—a priest, for example. And yet priests are no more forbidden to rejoice than you are. On what, then, is founded that distinction which you pretend to establish between yourselves and those consecrated to God? Did you not take the same engagements at Baptism to renounce Satan and his works and pomps? Do you doubt that dances are among the works of Satan? If they are not the works of Satan, they must be the works of Jesus Christ; there is no medium. If they are the works of Jesus Christ, Jesus approves of them, He dances in the person of the dancers, He animates them? Far from us be such a thought.

2. It is said that the saints of the Old Testament sometimes gave expression to their joy in dancing. Yes, but they did so only to thank God for His benefits and as a sign of their gratitude, while worldlings dance only for pleasure; and what pleasure!

3. People say: "Everything in this world is full of danger; objects of fear are found even in the holiest places; must we then quit the world?" You are not asked to do so. What you are asked to do is, not to confound the proximate occasion of sin with that which is remote; to distinguish between the dangers to which you voluntarily expose yourself, and those that are unavoidable.

4. Some one says: "I go to dances, and I always return from them innocent." Who speaks thus? Is it one of those virtuous, pious, modest people? No, such people rarely appear at balls. Who, then, is it that speaks in this way? A young libertine—a girl given up to pleasure—those so-called decent people of the world who, in giving way to their passions, fear nothing but the disgrace which exposure

would bring on them, who reproach themselves only with the crime that is consummated. What does this prove if not a strange corruption of heart?

5. Again: "S. Francis of Sales permits dancing." I am very far from admitting that S. Francis of Sales simply permitted dancing; on the contrary, he speaks of it in terms calculated to turn away from it any one who has preserved sentiments of piety. I am going to explain his teaching to you, and I tell you beforehand, I am quite willing that you should put it into practice. (See "Introduction to a Devout Life," part III, c. 33.)

6. Others, such as innkeepers and publicans, say that balls must be held in order that people may live and support their families. But cannot such people gain a living in a more honorable, and especially in a more Christian way, as so many others do? Let them consider that what they gain to the injury of virtue, being badly acquired, will not benefit them. They profane the Lord's Day and cause others to profane it; they are the cause of innumerable sins committed at or because of the dance. Young people, this teaching will appear to you very strict, you will perhaps despise it. But, alas! the day will come when you will recognize the truth of my words.

"Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play. They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." (Job xxi, 11, 12)

What will that end in?

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (*Ibid.*, 13)

But you, at least, fathers and mothers, will be more disposed to learn that you must shield your children. Remember that their sins, which you should have prevented, will be imputed to you.

"I will require his blood at thy hands." (Ezech. iii, 18)

God will perhaps forgive you your own sins, but you will be condemned for the sins you allowed your children to commit.

Division

Balls and dances should be avoided,

1. Because of the sins people commit in preparing for them, by dressing in garments that savor little of Christian modesty, by the loss of peace of soul, caused by the thought of the ball, of appearing there, of being remarked and envied by others;

2. Because of the familiarities, liberties, looks, etc., that are permitted there;

3. Because people often return from such places with a worldly dissipated spirit and a mind occupied with evil thoughts and desires, an imagination filled with the seductive objects seen there, and sometimes with unlawful attachments.

XLVI

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

ROBBERY—LARCENY

"Thou shalt not steal." (Exod. xx, 15)

Impurity is not the only vice that is spread over the earth like a deluge; injustice is hardly less common in the world: "Theft and adultery have overflowed." (Os. iv, 2). Consider: I. The gravity of theft; II. How common it is; III. The reasons given to justify it; IV. The punishment of this sin.

I. THE GRAVITY OF THEFT

1. *The seventh commandment forbids us to take and keep unjustly what belongs to another, and also unjustly to cause injury to our neighbor*

Theft is of its nature a mortal sin.

"The Lord thy God abhorreth him that doth these things, and He hateth all injustice." (Deut. xxv, 16)

"Do not err: neither thieves nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi, 10)

"Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own; how long also doth he load himself with thick clay?" (Habac. ii, 6)

"This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth: for every thief shall be judged." (Zach. v, 3)

"They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil." (1 Tim. vi, 9)

2. *Theft is contrary to the natural law*

"See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another." (Tob. iv, 16)

"All things therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets." (Matth. vii, 12)

3. *Injustice is so hated by all men that the very name of thief brings with it its own shame and punishment*

"Confusion and repentance is upon a thief." (Eccli. v, 17)

The very name of thief fills one with disgust and loathing.

"A law written in the heart of man, which is not effaced even by iniquity; for what thief patiently tolerates a thief?" (S. Aug.)

Theft is, then, of its nature a mortal sin; though owing to smallness of matter it may be only venial.

II. THEFT AND FRAUD ARE UNFORTUNATELY VERY COMMON

"Their mind studieth robberies, and their lips speak deceits." (Prov. xxiv, 2)

1. *People cheat in commerce*

"Thou shalt not have divers weights in thy bag, a greater and a less. Neither shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less. . . . For the Lord thy God abhorreth him that doth these things." (Deut. xxv, 13, 14)

"Do not any unjust thing in judgment, in rule, in weight, or in measure. Let the balance be just and the weights equal." (Levit. xix, 35, 36)

"Diverse weights and diverse measures, both are abominable before God. . . . A deceitful balance is not good." (Prov. xx, 10, 23)

"Thy merchants [Babylon] from thy youth, every one hath erred in his own way." (Is. xlvii, 15)

Monopoly. "That no man might buy or sell but he that hath the character, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." (Apoc. xiii, 17)

"He that hideth up corn shall be cursed among the people; but a blessing upon the head of them that sell." (Prov. xi, 26)

2. *Trustees sin when they do not faithfully administer the property of widows and orphans*

Employers who withhold the wages of their workmen.

"Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (Jas. v, 4)

"He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbor." (Eccli. xxxiv, 26)

"Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (Coloss. iv, 1)

"If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his

hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all." (Tob. iv, 15)

3. *Workmen and domestic servants, who do not do their work faithfully, who do not take care of their masters' property, who steal under the pretence of compensation, commit a sin*

It is to these the Apostle says:

"Not defrauding, but in all things showing great fidelity." (Tit. ii, 10)

"Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way." (Matth. xx, 13, 14)

4. *Those who contract debts which they foresee they will not be able to pay, or who do not make an effort to pay their debts*

"Render therefore to all men their dues. . . . Owe no man anything." (Rom. xiii, 7, 8)

"Many have looked upon a thing lent as a thing found, and have given trouble to them that helped them. Till they receive, they kiss the hand of the lender, and in promises they humble their voice, etc." (Eccli. xxix, 4–9)

5. *Those who shelter thieves or receive stolen goods*

"He that is a partaker with a thief hateth his own soul; he heareth one putting him to his oath and discovereth not." (Prov. xxix, 24)

"If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him." (Ps. xlix, 18)

"If the thief be not known, the master of the house . . . shall swear that he did not lay his hand upon his neighbor's good, to do any fraud either in ox or in ass, or anything that may bring damage." (Exod. xxii, 8, 9)

6. *Those who find something that was lost, and do not strive to discover the owner*

"Thou shalt not pass by if thou seest thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray; but thou shalt bring them back to thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh, or thou knowest him not, thou shalt bring them to thy house, until thy brother seek them and receive them. Thou shalt do in like manner with his ass and with his raiment, and with everything that is thy brother's, which is lost: if thou find it neglect it not as pertaining to another." (Deut. xxii, 1–3)

"Thou hast stolen that which thou hast found and hast not returned." (S. Aug.)

"Whosoever . . . shall find a thing lost, and denying it shall also

swear falsely . . . being convicted of the offence, he shall restore all that he would have gotten by fraud." (Levit. vi, 2–5)

7. *Children who take the property of their parents*

"He that stealeth anything from his father, or from his mother, and saith: This is no sin, is the partner of a murderer." (Prov. xxviii, 24)

8. *Usurers are guilty of theft*

"Thou shalt not give him any money upon usury, nor exact of him any increase of fruits." (Levit. xxv, 37)

"He that giveth upon usury, and that taketh an increase, shall such a one live? He shall not live. Seeing he hath done all these detestable things, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him." (Ezech. xviii, 13)

Injustice is practiced in various professions.

III. THE REASONS GIVEN TO JUSTIFY THEFT

1°. "I am obliged to steal so that I may have food for myself and my family."

2°. "I am only compensating myself. Others have stolen from me, and I am only making good my loss."

3°. "I am doing to him what he did to me."

"To no man rendering evil for evil." (Rom. xii, 17)

IV. THE EVILS CAUSED BY THEFT AND THE PUNISHMENT WHICH IT DESERVES

1. *Spiritual evils*

If the injury is considerable, theft is a mortal sin, entailing the loss of God's grace. A thief must make restitution, and he usually finds it difficult to bring himself to do so. If he does not make restitution, he dies guilty of all these injustices, and loses his soul, and sometimes even causes the ruin of his family.

"Gain in the purse and loss in the conscience; the garment is taken, and faith is lost; he acquires money and he loses grace." (S. Aug.)

2. *Temporal evils*

Are the injustices which are so hurtful to the soul in the next world, beneficial at least in this? There is no doubt of that, you will say. But to think so is an error: for to do wrong to a neighbor is to expose

yourself to the danger of becoming poorer and more miserable. This truth is founded on the word of God and on experience.

"Woe to him that gathereth together an evil covetousness to his house, that his nest may be on high, and thinketh he may be delivered out of the hand of evil. Thou hast devised confusion to thy house. . . . For the stone shall cry out of the wall; and the timber that is between the joints of the building shall answer." (Habac. ii, 9–11)

"Some distribute their own goods and grow richer; others take away what is not their own, and are always in want." (Prov. xi, 24)

"A man that maketh haste to be rich, and envieth others, is ignorant that poverty shall come upon him." (Prov. xxviii, 22)

"The riches of the unjust shall be dried up like a river, and shall pass away with a noise like a great thunder in rain." (Eccli. xl, 13)

"As yet there is a fire in the house of the wicked, the treasures of iniquity, and a scant measure full of wrath. Shall I justify wicked balances and the deceitful weights of the bag? By which her rich men were filled with iniquity. . . . And I therefore began to strike thee with desolation for thy sins." (Mich. vi, 10–13)

Goods unjustly gained bring no benefit.

"Those who seek the property of others quickly deprive themselves of their own." (S. Greg.)

"No one has an unjust gain with having a just loss." (S. Aug.)

God does not allow thieves to escape even from human justice; sooner or later they are discovered. Thus Achab was rebuked by the Prophet Elias for having robbed Naboth of his vineyard; he humbled himself, clothed himself in sack-cloth, but did not give up the vineyard; and therefore was not pardoned. (3 Kings, xxi, 1 sqq.)

"He [Judas] was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein." (John, xii, 6)

Tobias had a great fear of possessing what belonged to another. One day, on hearing the bleating of a kid which his wife had brought, he said:

"Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen; restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft." (Tob. ii, 21)

Avoid all injustice, and remember that "neither thieves nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi, 10)

"He that stole, let him now steal no more; but rather let him labor working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to him that suffers need." (Eph. iv, 28)

Divisions

I

1. What is *theft?* Different kinds of theft.

2. Is it a *great crime?* Are those who commit several thefts guilty of mortal sin?

3. Are children who take the property of their parents, guilty of theft?

4. Wives, who take something of considerable value without the consent of their husband? . . . A husband, without the consent of his wife?

5. When do *servants* and *workmen* sin against this commandment?

6. Are the *poor,* who take something from the rich to relieve themselves in their misery, guilty of theft?

7. Do those who cause *injury* to another, or who do not prevent such injury when they can do so, sin against this commandment?

II

1. The property of another may be taken,
1°. by violence,
2°. by cunning,
3°. by fraud,
4°. by usury, and
5°. by usurpation.

2. We retain the property of another,
1°. by not restoring what we have taken,
2°. by not paying our debts,
3°. by retaining a deposit confided to our care,
4°. by not furnishing accounts which we are obliged to furnish,
5°. by not trying to discover the owner of property which we find.

3. We sin against this commandment when we co-operate in acts of injustice,
1°. by commanding them to be committed,
2°. by counselling them,
3°. by consenting to them,
4°. by approving of them,
5°. by concealing stolen property.
6°. by sharing in it,
7°. by keeping silence,
8°. by not opposing thefts.

XLVII

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

RESTITUTION

"If it were taken away by stealth, he shall make the loss good to the owner." (Exod. xxii, 12)

To whom does this property, this money, which you possess, belong? "Whose image is this?" If you have acquired it lawfully, keep what Providence has given you; but if these things have been gained by unjust means, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (Matth. xxii, 21)

You understand that I am going to speak to you of the obligation of restitution. Consider I. The gravity of the obligation of making restitution; II. Who is bound by this obligation, and III. How the obligation should be fulfilled.

I. GRAVITY OF THE OBLIGATION OF MAKING RESTITUTION

The same law that forbids us to steal, commands us to restore what has been stolen. This obligation of restitution is founded on the natural law and on the necessity of our eternal salvation, which depends on it; it is an indispensable obligation which admits of no excuse.

1. *Reason* alone is sufficient to convince us of this obligation. "Do as you would be done by." We would not wish that another should unjustly take possession of our property. On the observance of this commandment depends the good order of society. Without it everything would be in disorder. It is then with as much justice as wisdom that God has given an express command not to steal. "Thou shalt not steal." But if there is a commandment that forbids the unjust taking of another's property, there is also one that orders it to be restored to its owner, because not to restore what has been stolen is to do wrong to another, to continue the theft.

2. *A thief cannot save his soul* unless he obtains pardon of his sin; but "the sin is not forgiven if restitution is not made."

"If the thief does not restore what he has stolen, when he can do so, his sorrow is pretended, not real." (S. Aug.)

Moreover, no matter how much good a man may do, all will be useless if he neglects to make restitution of that which he is bound

to restore. He must either give up this property or lose his soul; either make restitution or be condemned. Unjust usurpers of the property of others, do you understand this language? It is the language of faith, it is the language of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you do not believe it you abandon your religion and it is useless to frequent the Sacraments. But if you believe what religion teaches you, are you not mad to lose your soul for a fortune which you cannot carry with you?

"Lose the money, lest you lose your soul." (S. Aug.)

"You are not rich, and you would steal? What do you find? What do you lose? Oh, destructive gain! You find money, you lose justice." (S. Aug.)

"A grievous evil . . . riches kept to the hurt of the [avaricious and unjust] owner." (Eccle. v, 12)

"If that wicked man restore the pledge, and render what he had robbed, . . . and do no unjust thing, he shall surely live and shall not die." (Ezech. xxxiii, 15)

3. *All admit this obligation.* How then does it happen that so few make restitution? A cursed greed for this world's goods, a craving for riches so blinds people that they form a false conscience for themselves, or stifle the remorse they experience.

"From the least of them even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness." (Jer. vi, 13)

Vain pretexts are employed for dispensing oneself from this obligation of restitution. At one time people say they have a just title to the property; at another, that they require it to bring up their family; now they allege the disgrace they would incur in acknowledging themselves guilty of injustice by making restitution, and again they say they are unable to fulfil this obligation. These are vain excuses.

"What will it profit you to have begged pardon for your sin, if you do not repair the injury you have caused? You are bound by a twofold crime,—first, because you have grown rich by unlawful means; and secondly, because you retain the wealth unlawfully gained." (S. Greg. Naz.)

II. WHO ARE BOUND BY THIS OBLIGATION

Injustice reigns in almost every condition of life: "Theft and adultery have overflowed." (Os. iv, 2). There are many, therefore, who are bound to make restitution.

People are bound to restitution, either

1. because of the property of others which they possess; or
2. because of unjust usurpation that has been made; or
3. on account of injury they have caused.

1. *Because of the property of others which they possess*

Those who possess the property of others, whether, in bad faith or in good, are bound to restore it. They who possess it in good faith are bound to restitution when they learn that the property does not belong to them, unless they have possessed it in good faith during the time prescribed by law to make such possession legal, or unless they lost the property while they were in good faith.

"But," you will ask, "why should I deprive myself of property which I have not acquired unjustly?" You did not act unjustly in acquiring the property; but when you learn that it belongs to another, you must restore it; for you will be guilty of injustice if you keep it. How many people do we not see coming into a fortune, the origin of which could be discovered in the injustice of those who left it to them!

"In the simplicity of my heart I [Abimelech] have done this. And God said to him: I know that thou didst it with a sincere heart. Now, therefore, restore the man his wife [Sara]. But if thou wilt not restore her, know that thou shalt surely die." (Gen. xx, 5–7)

The possessors in bad faith (and are there not many such?) know that the property does not belong to them, and yet they cannot bring themselves to restore it. They must be forced to do so in a court of justice. How many deny their debts!

"He who succeeds to an inheritance full of iniquity, although he himself has not stolen, possesses the property of others; another robbed, you possess; he stole, you enjoy the fruits." (S. Chrys.)

2. *Unjust usurpation, that is to say, theft or larceny*

Under the name of theft are included all kinds of injustices committed against others, all the deceit, all the fraud used to enable one to gain possession of the property of others. But how many injustices are there not in the world!

1°. Injustice in the country; 2°. injustice in business; 3°. injustice in the courts, vindictive lawsuits, false evidence purchased with money; 4°. injustice among families. Fathers who squander the property of their children, masters who retain the wages of their servants, servants who steal the property of their masters, etc.

"Under the name of theft is clearly included all unlawful usurpation of another's property." (S. Aug.)

3. *On account of injury caused*

We cause injury to another directly or indirectly, by ourselves or by others. By ourselves, in destroying the property he possesses, or

unjustly preventing him from acquiring property. By others, in employing some one to do him an injury, or in not preventing an injury to him, when we are obliged to do so.

Injury can be done to another,

1°. in the assessment of public rates and taxes,

2°. in preventing him by unjust means from gaining a property or a position which he could procure for himself.

Finally, we are guilty of injustice, and bound to make restitution, when we co-operate efficaciously in the injury caused by another. Some co-operate positively, when they command, counsel, facilitate, or consent to injustice, or shelter those who commit it; others co-operate negatively, when they do not prevent the injustice or do not make it known when bound in duty to do so.

"They who do such things are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them." (Rom. i, 32)

Do people ever think of repairing the injuries that are the result of evil counsel given by them? No; they place this obligation on those who actually inflicted the injuries, and forget that they themselves also are loaded with the same burden, because of the influence they exercised in the unjust action.

Those who participate in the unjust acts committed by others, whether in assisting them to commit the act or in sharing in the profit of the theft, are bound to restitution.

It is not then on the highways and in the forests alone that injustice is committed. And yet the more widespread the injustice is, the rarer is the restitution.

"They have counted our life a pastime, and the business of life to be gain, and that we must be getting every way, even out of evil." (Wis. xv, 12)

III. HOW THE OBLIGATION SHOULD BE FULFILLED

Restitution should (1) be entire as to its object; (2) it should be made to the person injured; (3) it should be made promptly.

1. *The object must be restored such as it is, if it still exists*

This rule binds the possessor in good faith, as well as him who is in bad faith. If the object no longer exists, its just value must be restored, with this difference between the possessors in good and in bad faith, that if it ceased to exist while it was possessed in good faith, without the possessor having gained any profit from it, he is not bound to make restitution.

The possessor in bad faith is bound, moreover, to make good all the

lawful profits which the owner would have gained, and to make good the loss he has suffered by having been deprived of his property.

"If I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold." (Luke xix, 8)

"If it were taken away by stealth, he shall make the loss good to the owner." (Exod. xxii, 12)

"If any man hurt a field or a vineyard, and put in his beast to feed upon that which is other men's; he shall restore the best of whatsoever he hath in his own field, or in his vineyard, according to the estimation of the damage." (*Ibid.*, 5)

"If that which he stole be found with him . . . he shall restore double." (*Ibid.*, 4)

"If he have not wherewith to make restitution for the theft, he shall be sold." (*Ibid.*, 3)

2. *To whom restitution must be made*

To the person from whom the property has been taken, or to whom the injury has been caused, or to his heirs. It is useless to seek to satisfy the obligation of restitution by which one is bound by alms and pious legacies. Justice must go before charity.

Those deceive themselves then who, after having lived in comfort at the expense of others, believe themselves freed from their obligation because in their last will they have left some charitable bequests out of property which does not belong to them.

"It is not lawful to put them into the corbona, because it is the price of blood." (Matth. xxvii, 6)

"An alms of this kind is pharisaical, nay even diabolical." (S. Chrys.)

"Give alms out of thy substance." (Tob. iv, 7)

3. *Restitution should be made promptly*

The longer it is deferred, the more difficult it becomes, because the longer a person unjustly retains the property of another, the stronger will grow his inclination not to part with it.

To defer restitution is to put it off to an uncertain time, to a time when it will be no longer voluntary, to a time when probably it will not be made.

"All are cut off that were wrapped up in silver." (Soph. i, 11)

At the hour of death:

"The riches which he hath swallowed he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly." (Job xx, 15)

"The wages of him that hath been hired by thee shall not abide with thee until the morning." (Levit. xix, 13)

Imprudence of leaving this obligation of restitution to be fulfilled by one's heirs.

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold the hire of laborers . . . which, by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth." (Jas. v, 1–4)

"What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul." (Matth. xvi, 26)

"Neither thieves, nor covetous, shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi, 10)

"Let no iniquity have dominion over me." (Ps. cxviii, 133)

"Thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up." (Is. lviii, 8)

Divisions

I

1. *Restitution is necessary:*
1°. It must be made;
2°. it must be made quickly;
3°. it must be well made.

2. *Restitution is rare:*
1°. Because people do not wish to make it;
2°. because they think they are not bound to do so;
3°. because, though they intend to make restitution, they always defer doing so.

II

1. Nothing is easier than to find oneself guilty before God of injustice, and nothing is more difficult than to repair it.

1°. Two reasons are given by S. John Chrysostom for the facility with which injustice is committed:
(a) The cupidity within us;
(b) the frequent occasions outside us.

2°. *Difficulty of repairing the injustice committed.*
There is nothing more repugnant, more opposed to the natural inclination of man, than to deprive himself of those things that satisfy his cupidity. This passion suggests a thousand excuses to which man pays heed.

2. Nothing is falser than the pretended impossibility of making this reparation, and nothing truer than the impossibility of salvation without making it.

1°. The impossibility of restitution is commonly false and pretended. One says: "If I make restitution I shall ruin my family." Another, "I must maintain my position." Again, "Nothing would remain for my own support." Again, "I would be disgraced by making restitution." Again, "Where shall I find all those I have wronged?"

2°. Absolute impossibility of salvation unless restitution is made. Restitution, as far as it can be made, is an indispensable necessity.

XLVIII

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

ALMSGIVING

"Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor." (Eccli. iv, 1)

God has not only forbidden us to take or to keep unjustly the property of others; but He has also commanded us to share our goods with others and to assist them in their necessities. "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John, iii, 18). I. It is our duty to give alms; II. It is our interest to give alms; III. How to give alms.

I. IT IS OUR DUTY TO GIVE ALMS

Almsgiving is often regarded as a work of supererogation. This error arises from the sinful attachment which people of the world have to earthly goods. There is question, then, of undeceiving on this point a great number of rich people, who look with indifference on the misery of the poor, without giving them any help, because they do not believe they are bound to give it. They are, however, obliged to give alms; and this obligation arises from the commandment of God and from the relations which the poor have with the rich.

1. God has commanded us to give alms; 2. the poor, who are our brethren, have a claim on our bounty.

1. *God has commanded us to give alms*

"I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brethren." (Deut. xv, 11)

By this commandment God justifies His providence respecting the inequalities of condition that exist in this world. And certainly God had the right to impose this commandment on man, as He alone is Master of all that is in the universe.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." (Ps. xxiii, 1)

He can therefore dispose of it as He wills:

"Thou hast no need of my goods." (Ps. xv, 2)

The rich, out of the goods they have received, should pay tribute to

the poor, who hold the place of God. To refuse this homage to God in the person of the poor, is to rebel against His authority and sovereign dominion. Why are some living in luxury and others in want? Is it because God wished of His own choice to make some happy and others miserable? No, this inequality does not arise from the merits or demerits of men. The poor, because of the innocence of their lives, are often more pleasing to God than the rich. It must be said, therefore, that the Lord, out of the abundance of His riches, has prepared a source from which the needs of the poor may be supplied. Do not think, then, ye rich of this world, that you can dispose of the goods God has given you according to your own fancy and caprice.

"To thee is the poor man left; thou wilt be a helper to the orphan." (Ps. ix, 14; Hebrew)

"Let your abundance supply their want; that there may be an equality, as it is written: He that had much had nothing over; and he that had little had no want." (2 Cor. viii, 14, 15)

You cannot refuse alms to the poor without incurring the displeasure of God and becoming guilty of a grievous sin. To convince you of this I have only to cite the decree of condemnation which God will pronounce against the reprobate on the day of judgment: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. . . . I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink." (Matth. xxv, 41)

But when was it, O Lord?

"As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me." (*Ibid.*, 45)

The refusing of alms, then, will be for you a just cause of reprobation, even though you should have practised all other virtues.

"He that stoppeth his ears against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself and shall not be heard." (Prov. xxi, 13)

"Remember what happened to the rich man clothed in purple, who was damned, not for taking the property of others, but for refusing to help a poor beggar; and he who refused to give a small thing here, being buried in hell, was himself forced to ask for a very small thing." (S. Aug.)

"Miserable man, what answer will you give to the Judge? You adorn your walls, you do not clothe a man; you decorate your horses in costly trappings, you despise your brother clothed in rags." (S. Ambr.)

2. *This obligation is based also on the relations which the poor have with us*

They are our brethren in Jesus Christ. They are our fellow-

creatures. They are Christians as we, purchased at the same price as we. We should, therefore, look on them as on ourselves, and do to them all the good we should like others to do to us if we were in their place. But, alas! the poor are seen languishing in misery, and there is no one to take pity on them.

Know, ye rich, that you sin not only against charity, but also in some measure against justice. That bread which you have in abundance, "is the bread of the hungry; the covering of the naked." (S. Ambr.) You are, then, guilty of a kind of theft when you do not make use of your superfluous riches to help the needy. . . . "It is theft; it is robbery." (S. Ambr.)

"The superfluities of the rich are necessary to the poor; those who possess riches in superabundance possess the property of others." (S. Aug.)

"The superabundance of the rich is the property of the poor; and the crime of taking from him who possesses is not greater than that of refusing to give out of your abundance to him who is in want." (S. Ambr.)

Perhaps the poor, by their coarse manners and repulsive appearance, shock your sense of delicacy and excite your indignation! Rise above these promptings of nature, and with the eyes of faith see in the person of the poor Jesus Christ Himself, poor, suffering in His members, and asking help from you. Yes, these poor, with bodies trembling with cold and wasted away by hunger, with faces thin and pale, are members of Jesus Christ. He asks you to have pity on them. . . . Ah! if Christ Himself were still on earth and in His hunger asked food from you, would you not consider it an honor and a duty to offer Him all you had? Do, then, for the poor a little of what you would do for Him, since He considers as done to Himself what you do for His members.

"The hand of the poor is the treasury of Christ, because what the poor receive Christ accepts." (S. Chrys.)

"If a brother or sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you say to him: Go in peace, be you warmed and filled; yet give him not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" (Jas. ii, 15, 16)

"He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John iii, 17)

"Give to all, lest he to whom you do not give be Christ Himself." (S. Aug.)

"There is nothing so much in accordance with nature, as to help him who shares in our nature." (S. Ambr.)

II. IT IS OUR INTEREST TO GIVE ALMS

"Give and it shall be given to you; good measure . . . and running over shall they give into your bosom." (Luke vi, 38)

God will give to the charitable (1) riches of fortune and of grace in this world; (2) riches of glory in the world to come.

1. "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord." (Prov. xix, 17)

"He that giveth to the poor shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty shall suffer indigence." (Prov. xxviii, 27)

The profit which the charitable man gains by giving alms arises on the one hand from the goodness of God, and on the other from the prayers of the poor. Whatever is done for the poor is considered by Almighty God as done to Himself; and He rewards it by the blessings He pours down on charitable souls. Thus we see some families prosper, some people succeed in business in which others fail. It is their own pious generosity and the prayers which the poor send up to Heaven, that merit for them the generosity of the Lord. The poor man prays for the father of a family, and that father sees prosperity in his house. The poor pray for the working man, who sees the dew from heaven falling on his fields.

"The Lord has heard the poor." (Ps. lxviii, 34)

And if the poor did not pray, the alms themselves would pray for the giver:

"Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil." (Eccli. xxix, 15)

"The alms stand at the tribunal of Christ, not only giving protection themselves, but also praying the Judge to give His protection, and to pronounce sentence for them." (S. Chrys.)

What graces do not alms bring down on those who give them! Graces of conversion . . . graces of perseverance.

"Alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it." (Tob. iv, 11)

"Water quencheth a flaming fire and alms resisteth sin." (Eccli. iii, 33)

"Give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you." (Luke xi, 41)

Yes, alms purify the sinner and make him holy; they draw down on him graces that cause him to pass from the slavery of sin to the blessed liberty of the children of God.

The alms of the Centurion, Cornelius, caused God to send an angel to instruct him in the way of salvation. (Acts x, 2 ff.)

"Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor." (Dan. iv, 24)

"A merciful man doth good to his own soul." (Prov. xi, 17)

"God wishes that there should be poor in this world, so that the rich may atone for their sins." (S. Aug.)

Almsgiving is a certain means of obtaining *perseverance in grace.* Because alms procure the grace of conversion for sinners, and draw down on the just that of perseverance.

"God provideth for him that showeth favor; He remembereth him afterwards, and in the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay." (Eccli. iii, 34)

The grace of a holy death is also the reward of alms. There is no day more to be feared than the day of death. But as this just man has freed the poor from their misery during his life, God in His turn will deliver him from all the horrors of death. He received the poor into the bosom of his charity, God will receive him into the bosom of His mercy.

"Blessed is he that understands concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in his evil day. The Lord preserve him . . . and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies." (Ps. xl, 2, 3)

"The Lord help him on his bed of sorrow; Thou hast turned all his couch in his sickness." (*Ibid.*, 4)

"I do not remember reading of the bad death of any one who willingly performed works of charity; for he has many intercessors, and it is impossible that the prayers of many should not be heard." (S. Jerome)

2. Generous and charitable people need not, then, fear death; it will have no bitterness or terror for you. Your soul will quickly leave this mortal body, and at that moment the poor whom you have helped, Jesus Christ Himself, will come to meet you.

"Come, . . . possess the kingdom prepared for you . . . I was hungry and you gave Me to eat . . . I was a stranger and you took Me in." (Matth. xxv, 34)

Ah! the value of alms will be known on that day; on that day of fear when hearts hardened towards the poor will have nothing to expect but a sentence of terror; on that day when the charitable will appear with confidence before their Judge, sustained by the alms they have given.

"Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that

when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke xvi, 9)

Like the faithful Israelites saved by Jonathan, the poor by their prayers will turn aside the sentence of death.

"Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?" (1 Kings xiv, 45)

"Give alms; make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in Heaven which faileth not; where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth." (Luke xii, 33)

The Lord will place on thrones of glory those who will have shown mercy.

"Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv, 9)

"He who gives food to Christ in the person of the poor stores up his treasure in Heaven." (S. Leo)

III. HOW TO GIVE ALMS

1. *Give with kindness and a pure intention*

"Every one as he hath determined in his heart, not with sadness or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix, 7)

"Some abuse the poor when giving them alms. It would seem, therefore, that the only merit they can have for their almsgiving in such a case is to make satisfaction to the poor for the injury caused by the abuse." (S. Greg.)

Do not await the importunities of the poor.

"That mercy which is extorted by prayers is not perfect enough." (S. Aug.)

"He who gives alms, not to help the needy, but to free himself from the importunity of the beggar, loses both the gift and the merit of giving." (*Ibid.*)

Give without ostentation.

"When thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." (Matth. vi, 3)

2. *Give generously*

That is to say, let your alms be in proportion to your means; if you have but little, give a little, but with a good heart.

"According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little." (Tob. iv, 8, 9)

Consult neither ambition nor avarice as to what you should give to the poor.

"The hard-hearted deprive the poor of what is necessary, in order to provide themselves with what is superfluous and luxurious." (S. Basil)

3. *Give with discretion*

That is to say, consider not only your means, but also the various needs of the poor. Give first to those most in need, to relatives, etc.

"Mercy is accustomed not to judge of the merits, but to relieve the necessities; to help the poor, not to examine the justice of their claims." (S. Ambr.)

4. *Give alms at a suitable time*

Do not wait until the poor are in extreme want. Give alms during life, for it is to be feared that alms given only at death no longer have any merit before God. It is to be feared that the heirs may not carry out the wishes of the testator.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matth. v, 7)

The rich man was buried in hell because of his want of charity towards the poor. (Luke xvi, 22)

"[While the avaricious man] shall vomit up the riches which he hath swallowed, and God shall draw them out of his belly" (Job xx, 15), [the charitable man] "shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matth. xix, 29)

Divisions

I

Refutation of the reasons people bring forward to excuse themselves from giving alms.

1. This commandment is for those who are rich; and when there is question of its application, there is no one found who wishes to be rich.

2. The precept is for the relief of all the poor; and when there is question of applying it to them, just as there are not found any rich people whom it can bind, so there are no longer to be found any who deserve to be included among the really poor.

3. This precept binds at all times; and when there is question of complying with it, the times are so very bad that it becomes impracticable.

II

We are obliged to give alms:

1. by the *natural law,* as men;
2. by the *Gospel,* as Christians;
3. as *sinners,* because of the satisfaction we owe to God for our sins.

III

The love we owe:
1. to God,
2. to our neighbor,
3. to ourselves, all bind us to give alms.

XLIX

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

FALSE TESTIMONY

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exod. xx, 16)

The eighth commandment forbids all false testimony, calumny, rash judgment, and lies. Consider: I. The gravity of the sin of false testimony; II. The punishment of this sin.

I. GRAVITY OF THE SIN OF FALSE TESTIMONY

The false testimony which God principally forbids here is that which is given on oath in a court of justice. It is especially on such an occasion that the rule laid down in the Gospel should be exactly observed: "Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no" (Matth. v, 37), because false evidence is a very great sin.

1. *It Wounds Truth*

It is on the truth of the holy Gospel that the false witness swears to the falsehood. He tells a lie before God and man:

"Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." (Acts v, 4)

"A false oath is a very grave sin." (S. Aug.)

2. *It Wounds Charity*

Assuredly the false witness does to another what he would not wish to be done to himself: he causes great affliction to his neighbor.

"A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor, is like a dart and a sword and a sharp arrow." (Prov. xxv, 18)

"Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue framed deceits. Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son . . . I will reprove thee, and set before thy face." (Ps. xlix, 19–21)

3. *It Wounds Justice*

The false witness deceives the judges appointed to administer justice; he directs their judgment against public or private rights; he causes a

law-suit to be lost by him who should gain it; he shields the guilty and punishes the innocent; he would wish to deceive even God Himself.

"He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." (Rom. xiii, 2)

"An unjust witness scorneth judgment." (Prov. xix, 28)

4. *It Wounds Religion*

The unjust witness calls upon God, upon His holy name, upon all that is most sacred, to bear witness to the truth of his false testimony.

"Thou hast made me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities." (Is. xliii, 24)

"God making promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater by whom He might swear, swore by Himself . . . For men swear by one greater than themselves; and an oath for confirmation is the end of all their controversy." (Heb. vi, 13, 16)

II. PUNISHMENT OF THIS SIN

1. It is God Himself who has appointed proof by evidence as the rule of judgment among men.

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand." (Deut. xix, 15)

The public welfare demands that true answers should be given to questions put by a judge in his judicial capacity. The welfare of a private individual, who is unlawfully treated, requires it also.

"Rescue the poor; and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner." (Ps. lxxxi, 4)

"Deliver them that are led to death." (Prov. xxiv, 77)

Witnesses, it is left to you to determine the sentence that decides questions concerning the goods, the fortune, even the lives of others. Behold the importance of your deposing to the exact truth.

God expresses the greatest horror of false witnesses; He declares that they shall not escape unpunished.

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth . . . A deceitful witness that uttereth lies." (Prov. vi, 16, 19)

Against such He pronounces terrible decrees of vengeance and death.

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." (Prov. xix, 5)

"A lying witness shall perish." (Prov. xxi, 28)

It is because the false witness is an assassin, a murderer. "He is like a dart and a sword and a sharp arrow." (Prov. xxv, 18)

Ruin, dishonor, disgrace, sorrow, affliction, even death itself, are the sad effects of false testimony.

2. *Human laws* have always punished false witnesses very severely, often even condemned them to death. Formerly the laws of certain countries directed that false witnesses should be branded on the hand, and that murderous hand which was sacrilegiously raised to give false evidence that took away life, was sometimes cut off; that merciless witness who had caused death, perished on an infamous gibbet: "The false witness shall perish."

History of the old men who falsely accused the chaste Susanna. (Dan. xiii)

History of Naboth, who was condemned to death on the evidence of two false witnesses:

"Bringing two men, sons of the devil." (3 Kings, xxi, 13)

If, then, you are some day called on to give evidence, tell the exact truth,—tell as true that which you believe to be true, as doubtful, that which appears to you doubtful. Never let either hatred or friendship or hope or a dishonorable gain cause you to give false testimony.

There are shameless corrupters, suborners, who solicit, who purchase false evidence: be very careful not to yield to their solicitations.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent not to them." (Prov. i, 10)

"All things obey money." (Eccle. x, 19)

3. Another kind of false evidence, which is no less criminal, is the forging of letters, deeds, etc. This is the crime of *forgers*.

There is no pardon for this sin, unless reparation be made. The false witness must therefore restore the property, the honor, the reputation he has destroyed.

Fly from this crime, which is so injurious to others and which should inspire a great horror in us.

L

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

BACKBITING—DETRACTION

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exod. xx, 16)

God has given us the use of speech. How should we employ this gift? What use should we make of our tongue? Some employ it in swearing and blasphemy, others in uttering detraction and calumny against their neighbor. If so many reputations are injured, so much hatred is perpetuated in families, is it not owing to evil tongues that scatter the deadly poison of slander? To-day I speak to those who are guilty of this sin; on them I would wish, if I could do so, to impose an eternal silence, since they make such bad use of the talent which God has confided to them. I. There is nothing so common as backbiting; II. There is nothing so difficult to repair as the consequences of this sin.

I. THERE IS NOTHING SO COMMON AS BACKBITING

The gift of speech is one of those that are most abused. This is why St. James says: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. iii, 6, 8)

It is by *detraction* especially that this poisoned fountain spreads its venom.

Detraction is the unjust defamation of another's character. It does all the more injury, (a) because it can be committed in so many ways; (b) because it can be committed so easily; (c) because of the great number of people who are addicted to it.

1. *It can be committed in many different ways*

A person may commit slander directly or indirectly.

He commits it directly, who,

1°. Imputes to another a crime of which the latter is not guilty: that is calumny.

2°. Who exaggerates a fault committed by another;

3°. Who makes known without necessity the real but secret faults of another;

4°. Who puts a bad construction on the good deed of another.

A person commits this sin indirectly,

1°. When he denies the good another has done;

2°. When he lessens it;

3°. When, being bound to approve or confirm the praises bestowed on another, he nevertheless observes an injurious silence;

4°. When he praises the act of another so coldly that he diminishes the credit due to it.

Detraction is a most hateful sin.

"The detractor is the abomination of men." (Prov. xxiv, 9)

"Detractors are hateful to God." (Rom. i, 30)

"The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed: for he hath troubled many that were at peace." (Eccli. xxviii, 15)

"Detract not one another, my brethren. He that detracteth his brother, detracteth the law." (Jas. iv, 11)

"If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly." (Eccle. x, 11)

"The man that in private detracted his neighbor, him did I persecute." (Ps. c, 5)

"When I was gone from them, they spoke against me." (Job xix, 18)

"To shoot in the dark the upright of heart." (Ps. x, 3)

"Detraction is a great vice, detraction is a great sin, detraction is a great crime." (S. Bern.)

"The detractor kills his own soul when he wounds the good name of another." (S. Aug.)

How many innocent people there are whom calumny has charged with atrocious crimes! Calumny, as a rule, has no other foundation than a groundless suspicion of a rash judgment.

That man, evilly-disposed towards another, thinks badly of his conduct, puts a bad construction on actions indifferent in themselves, or even praiseworthy. Some one is seen entering a house, and he is credited with a bad intention in doing so. An article is lost, and the owner suspects some one of stealing. These groundless suspicions are made known to others, calumny is committed, and the reputation of an innocent person is destroyed.

"Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue framed deceits. Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother." (Ps. xlix, 19, 20)

How many there are who do not feel the least scruple in making the vices and faults of others much greater than they are!

On the pretext that they say nothing but what is true, they seem to

think that they are allowed to reveal all. Where, then, is "charity, which covereth a multitude of sins"? (1 Pet. iv, 8)

As long as the fault of another is hidden, he has a right to his reputation, and it is an injustice to rob him of it.

The public good does not always require you to reveal the sins of others.

You make known the faults of another under a promise of secrecy! Useless precaution.

"He that speaketh unjust things cannot be hid, neither shall the chastising judgment pass him by." (Wis. i, 8)

You may, and sometimes are, obliged to make known to a father the faults of his son, to a superior those of a subject,—when there is question of applying a remedy to these faults.

Indirect slander.

Some people have a horror of calumny, perhaps even of making known any fault committed by another; but they do not fear to speak of the good deeds of others with such malice as to destroy all their merit in the eyes of men. If one praises a virtuous act, another will strive to snatch the credit of that act from him to whom it is due, either by denying that he has done it, or by attributing to him a bad intention in doing it, or by adding to it some vicious circumstance that lessens its merit. A charitable man gives alms, and it is said that he does so through vanity and ostentation. Another renders an important service to some one, and he is said to do it through motives of self-interest. A young girl leads a good Christian life, and she is called a hypocrite.

"They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways. . . . Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood." (Ps. xiii, 2, 3)

"They have whetted their tongues like a sword; they have bent their bow a bitter thing, to shoot in secret the undefiled." (Ps. lxiii, 4, 5)

"Come, and let us strike him with the tongue." (Jer. xviii, 18)

Others begin by praising those whom they wish to blame: That man is charitable, but he visits a person whom he should not visit. . . . That man prays much, but he keeps unjustly what belongs to another. . . . This woman is devout in church, she manages her household well, but she has a lying, dangerous tongue. . . . What a pity about that young man! he has excellent qualities, but . . . That priest (for the slanderer

spares no one) is zealous, exact in the discharge of his duties, but . . . This is how the slanderer, according to the words of the prophet, steeps his arrows in oil, in order that they may penetrate farther,—make deeper wounds.

"His words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts." (Ps. liv, 22)

"All day long thy tongue hath devised injustice; as a sharp razor thou hast wrought deceit." (Ps. li, 4)

Sometimes people dare not vilify openly, but they find a way to do so by certain signs, a look, a shake of the head, by an affected silence when the praises of another are spoken, or by assuming an expression of sadness and resignation when listening to these praises.

"It is a common practice with the proud who seek applause, to vilify their neighbors, because they imagine that the disgrace of another will redound to their own praise. Moreover, when the proud cannot take pleasure in their own merits, they seem to find satisfaction in making others worse than themselves, and then comparing themselves with these." (S. Jerome)

"Detraction is born of envy." (S. Greg.)

"The detractor is full of envy, and no way of life pleases him but that of detraction; in other words, the work of detraction is his chief occupation." (S. Ephrem)

"Some [detractors] endeavor, under the cloak of pretended modesty and by double-meaning words, to pour forth the malice which is in their hearts and which they cannot keep there without bursting." (S. Bern.)

"What else does the detractor intend, than that the person whom he slanders should incur the odium of others?" (S. Bern.)

2. Facility of slandering

A thief does not always succeed in his attempts to steal. But everything helps the slanderer to make the commission of his crime easy: easy on the part of him who utters the slander, easy on the occasions that are found for speaking it, easy on the part of those who hear it.

Slander is easy on the part of him who utters it. Tongue and speech are always at our disposal. With some it is want of thought or a longing for gossip; with others it is a malicious jealousy.

Occasions on the part of those who give matter for slander. For what man is so perfect as never to show any signs of weakness? Occasions in the intercourse which people have with those around them, in the conversations which take place for the most part regarding the

faults of others. People listen to slander, they are full of curiosity to know what such a one has said, has done; they inquire about his conduct; they are very desirous of knowing all about his movements, his life. In this way slander becomes easy on the part of those who listen to it.

"The tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. iii, 8)

"If you listen to a detractor with a joyful countenance, you urge him on to slander; he kindles the fire, you spread it abroad. If you listen to him with a sad and averted face, he will learn not to speak willingly what he sees is not heard with pleasure." (S. Jerome)

"The evil is widespread and frequent, because all listen to it with pleasure." (S. Paulin.)

3. *Detraction does all the more injury because of the great number of people who are addicted to it*

Is it surprising that slander should be so widespread, when, instead of discouraging it, the greater number listen to it with pleasure and spread it? Almost all classes of society are infected with this vice. Go into houses and listen to the conversation that is being carried on: you will hardly see two or three together who are not making some one the subject of their uncharitable remarks. You hear them discuss in detail persons in every state of life, now speaking uncharitably of one, now censuring another. Here it is a business man that runs down another whom he sees more respected than himself; there it is an artisan, who in order to praise his own work, disparages the work of men of his own profession. Ah! how rare it is to find people who are quite free from this vice!

"If any man offend not with the tongue, the same is a perfect man." (Jas. iii, 2)

"Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue." (Eccli. xxviii, 22)

"The minds of men have been seized by so great a passion for this vice, that even those who have most carefully avoided other vices, fall into this as into the last snare of the devil." (S. Paulin.)

"Make this a rule for yourself: to suspect every one who fears to say openly what he has told as a secret." (S. Bern.)

II. THERE IS NOTHING MORE DIFFICULT TO REPAIR THAN THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SIN

It is difficult

(1) Because of the good name that must be restored; (2) on the part of him who must restore it.

1. *Because of the good name that must be restored*

Reputation is so precious a thing that men will willingly sacrifice all they have to preserve it.

"A good name is better than great riches." (Prov. xxii, 1)

"Take care of a good name; for this shall continue with thee, more than a thousand treasures precious and great." (Eccli. xli, 15)

But it is very difficult to repair a wrong done to the reputation of any one. For he who spoke the injurious words said what is either true or false: if what he said is true, he cannot retract, and therefore all the praise he can give his neighbor will never restore that neighbor's good name. If what he said is not true, he will never be able to destroy the calumny, no matter what retraction he may make. It will be said that he withdrew his words through some interested motive. Such and such a man passed as a good man; he was esteemed as just and upright; but an enemy, jealous of his good name and prosperity, poured over his conduct the poison of censure. The result is that he lost the respect and esteem of others; and no matter what the slanderer may do to repair the injury he has done, he will never succeed. That young girl has never given cause for evil rumors, but a lying tongue spread bad reports about her, and she lost her good name. All she may do now will not prevent her being suspected of the sins laid to her charge, sins of which she has never thought; and notwithstanding all the liar may say to clear that girl's character, the false statements have been, and will be, believed.

"Behold how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth." (Jas. iii, 5)

"A man full of tongue is terrible in his city." (Eccli. ix, 25)

Sad effects of slander:

Divisions in families, hatred, quarrelling, loss of property. How can all that be repaired? That husband and wife were attached to each other; those relatives, those neighbors, lived in friendly intercourse; but an enemy spread bad reports about them. The husband and wife could no longer bear each other; the relatives, the neighbors became irreconcilable enemies. Who is the cause of these evils? It is you, slanderers, who have the tongues of vipers. You will strive in vain to re-unite those divided hearts; you will never succeed in doing so.

You have spoken badly of that man, and have caused him to lose his employment—of that merchant whose business you have injured—of that artisan whom you have deprived of work. You have blackened the name of that young man, of that young woman, who were about to be united in the holy bonds of marriage, and have caused them to separate. How will you repair all the harm you have done?

"From detraction spring hatred, quarrels, dissensions, and evil suspicions." (S. Chrys.)

"The wounds caused by the tongue are greater than those inflicted by the sword; for the sword takes away the life of the body only, but does not kill the soul." (S. Aug.)

"Detraction is a grave evil and a restless demon." (S. Chrys.)

"The man who kills his brother and he who detracts are equally guilty of homicide."

2. *Reparation is very difficult on the part of him who is bound to make it*

When a man steals, he can make restitution without letting his theft become known. But the case is different with him who has to restore the reputation of another whom he has slandered. His obligation is personal. If what he stated was false, he must show himself in his true character,—a liar, a slanderer; if he spoke the truth, he must show that he was an envious tale-bearer. He must restore the honor of the other at the loss of his own. But is that easy? The proof that instead of being easy it is very difficult is, that it is not done. Many people are guilty of slander, few make reparation for the injuries they have caused by their slander.

"The man that is accustomed to opprobrious words, will never be corrected all the days of his life." (Eccli. xxiii, 20)

"I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun, and the tears of the innocent, and they had no comforter." (Eccli. iv, 1)

"Because he oppressed and offered violence to his brother, . . . behold he is dead in his own iniquity." (Ezech. xviii, 18)

"[Nevertheless] the sin is not forgiven unless restitution is made." (S. Aug.)

And even though the slanderer should force himself to repair the injury he has done to the reputation of his neighbor, will he succeed in doing so? Will he be able to extinguish the conflagration he has kindled? When his slander has come to the knowledge of a great number of people, how will he be able to restore the reputation of another in all those places where it has been injured? Yet, although in these circumstances the reparation becomes difficult, if not impossible, the slanderer is no less obliged to do all in his power to repair the injury he has inflicted. But will he do all he should do? Would *you* do it? Have you already done it, you who are guilty of this crime?

Be careful, then, says the Holy Spirit, not to sin with the tongue, lest your fall, becoming incurable, may cause death.

"Take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue . . . and thy fall be incurable unto death." (Eccli. xxviii, 30)

"There are very few who renounce this vice, and you will rarely find those whose lives are so blameless that they do not censure others freely." (S. Paulin.)

"Keep yourselves therefore from murmuring, which profiteth nothing, and refrain your tongue from detraction, for an obscure speech shall not go for nought." (Wis. i, 11)

"Thou shalt not calumniate thy neighbor." (Levit. xix, 13)

"Have nothing to do with detractors, for their destruction shall rise suddenly: and who knoweth the ruin of both?" (Prov. xxiv, 21, 22)

"It is not easy to say who is to be condemned more,—he who detracts, or he who listens to a detractor." (S. Aug.)

"The north wind driveth away rain, as doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue." (Prov. xxv, 23)

"Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue, and make doors and bars to thy mouth." (Eccli. xxviii, 28)

"They who do such things are worthy of death: and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them." (Rom. i, 32)

"To listen to a detractor and not to condemn his foul words seems like certifying to their truth." (S. Ephrem)

"Remove from thee a froward mouth, and let detracting lips be far from thee." (Prov. iv, 24)

"Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor? Let it die within thee; trusting that it will not burst thee." (Eccli. xix, 10)

"Say to the detractor: Is there any one whom you praise? My ears are open to receive the sweet sounds; but if you will speak evil things, they are closed; for I cannot endure filth and dirt." (S. Chrys.)

"He that will love life, . . . let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." (1 Pet. iii, 10)

"In the multitude of words there shall not want sin." (Prov. x, 19)

"One often repents having spoken much, one never repents having kept silence." (Simonides)

"I said: I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." (Ps. xxxviii, 1)

Divisions

I

1. *What backbiting is.* 2. *How it is committed.* 3. *How sinful it is.*

1. Backbiting or detraction is unjustly depriving another of his good name in his absence.

2. It is committed in various ways.

Directly:

1°. by falsely attributing crime to another;

2°. by exaggerating the crime or fault of another;

3°. by making known the secret faults of another;

4°. by putting a bad construction on the words or deeds of another, which are in themselves good or indifferent.

Indirectly:

1°. by contradicting one who speaks well of his neighbor;

2°. by trying to lessen the good done by another;

3°. by not praising, or speaking well of one's neighbor, when one's silence would be a tacit censure or approbation of a calumny;

4°. by speaking so coldly in praise of the good done by another that the praise bestowed is taken rather for condemnation.

3. How criminal it is.

Slander is criminal because it springs from the vilest and most criminal passions,—envy, hatred, and revenge.

4. Advice,

1°. to those who are guilty of slander;

2°. to those who listen to it;

3°. to those who are slandered.

II

Evils caused by slander:

1. It violates charity.

2. It causes discord between the slanderer and him who is slandered.

3. It blackens the good name of individuals and families so much that they can never clear themselves.

4. The slanderer often places himself in a position in which it is morally impossible for him to save his soul on account of the difficulty of repairing the wrong he has inflicted.

5. The slanderer often causes the damnation of the souls of those he slanders, who are filled with hatred and revenge against him.

III

Slander destroys three classes of people:

1. those who are guilty of it;

2. those who listen to it;

3. those who are slandered.

IV

1. There is nothing meaner or more hateful than the sin of slander.

2. There is nothing more dangerous to salvation.

LI

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

LYING

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exod. xx, 16)

Lying is one of the most common vices in this world. "Every man is a liar." (Ps. cxv, 11)

The more wide-spread this vice is, the more we should fight against it. Consider: I. The gravity of the sin and its effects; II. The frivolous excuses that are given to justify it.

I. THE GRAVITY OF THE SIN AND ITS EFFECTS

From the object which one has in lying we can distinguish three kinds of lies: the officious lie, the jocose lie, and the malicious lie.

People regard lies as a mere trifle, especially such as are told for amusement and diversion; and they feel still less scruple in telling lies in their own interest,—to oblige some one, to avert some misfortune, etc. Ah! they would soon change their minds if they reflected, (1) that a lie offends God, (2) that it is injurious to society, (3) that it injures the liar himself.

1. *A lie offends God.*

If any one doubted this, I could cite many passages from Holy Scripture in which God is not content with forbidding this vice, but moreover shows that He detests and abhors it, and will punish liars with rigor. He forbids lies of all kinds, even those told to render a service to another.

"Be not willing to make any manner of lie." (Eccli. vii, 14)

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xii, 22).

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth . . . a lying tongue . . . a deceitful witness that uttereth lies." (Prov. vi, 16)

"Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie." (Ps. v, 7)

"He that speaketh lies shall not escape [punishment]." (Prov. xix, 5)

"He that speaketh lies shall perish." (Prov. xix, 9)

Do you wish to know why God has so great a hatred of this sin?

It is because He is truth and truth itself. Therefore He rejects liars, and does not look on them as His children, but regards them rather as children of the devil.

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth; because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father thereof." (John viii, 44)

"Lying is the offspring of the devil." (S. Basil)

"All liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone." (Apoc. xxi, 8)

"Liars are the more reprehensible before God for their falsehood, the more they themselves see what is true." (S. Greg.)

2. *Lying injures society*

What would become of society without good faith? How could we live with those whom we could not trust?

"A thief is better than a man that is always lying: but both of them shall inherit destruction." (Eccli. xx, 27)

We, being members of the same body, should not deceive one another.

"Putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor: for we are members one of another." (Eph. iv, 25)

"Does the eye deceive the foot, or the foot the eye?" (S. Chrys.)

"You shall not lie, neither shall any man deceive his neighbor." (Levit. xix, 11)

"Let deceitful lips be made dumb." (Ps. xxx, 19)

3. *The liar injures himself*

1°. In his *reputation.* A liar is generally despised.

"The manners of lying men are without honor: and their confusion is with them without ceasing." (Eccli. xx, 28)

"A lie is a foul blot in a man." (*Ibid.* 26)

2°. In his *business.* No one cares to deal with him, fearing to be deceived.

"They tell lies, and therefore they are not believed when they speak the truth." (S. Jerome)

Moreover, by his lies he draws down the displeasure of God on his undertakings.

"He that setteth a stone for his neighbor, shall stumble upon it: and he that layeth a snare for another, shall perish in it." (Eccli. xxvii, 29)

3°. God sometimes inflicts *bodily punishment* on him. Ananias and Saphira are examples of this. (Acts v)

4°. But it is especially on his *soul* that the liar inflicts *injury*.

If he tells a lie in a grave matter, for example, in confession, in taking an oath, and in other circumstances in which it is important to tell the truth, or when a lie is gravely injurious; he commits a mortal sin.

"The mouth that belieth, killeth the soul." (Wis. i, 11)

"With his mouth one speaketh peace with his friend, and secretly he lieth in wait for him. Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord? or shall not my soul be revenged on such a nation?" (Jer. ix, 8, 9)

And even though the lie should be concerning a light matter, can you regard this evil as of no consequence? Do you count it as nothing to offend God?—to lose some of His friendship?—to deprive yourself of many graces?—to deserve Purgatory?

The same must be said of equivocations and mental restrictions; they are forms of lies which should be avoided.

"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? He that speaketh the truth. . . . He that sweareth to his neighbor and deceiveth not." (Ps. xiv, 1, 3, 4)

"Keep thy lips from speaking guile." (Ps. xxxiii, 14)

"The double-dealer uttereth lies." (Prov. xiv, 25)

"A deceitful witness uttereth a lie. . . . The crafty man is hateful." (*Ibid.*, 5, 17)

"Every lie is an injustice, because whatever is opposed to truth is certainly opposed to justice." (S. Greg.)

"A lie consists not only in false words, but also in simulated works; it is a lie, for instance, to call oneself a Christian, and not to lead the life of a Christian. (S. Aug.)

II. FRIVOLOUS EXCUSES GIVEN TO JUSTIFY LYING

Is it not astonishing to find people trying to excuse their falsehoods?

1. "We are forced to lie," merchants, workmen, etc., say; "without doing so we could not make a living."

"What else is the life of all traders but fraud and perjury?" (Salv.)

"What else is the life of litigants but a concoction of deceit and a mixture of lies?" (*Id.*)

But they make use of wrong means to gain their object. Sooner or later a liar loses credit, forfeits the confidence of others; God will not bless his undertakings; and yet,

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Ps. cxxvi, 1)

Even supposing that their falsehoods are profitable to their temporal interests, what will it benefit them to gain the whole world if they lose

their souls? There is, then, only one necessity, namely, the necessity of not committing sin.

"There is no necessity of sinning incumbent on those on whom only one necessity presses, that of not sinning." (Tert.)

2. Others say they tell lies in order to maintain peace in the family, in order not to cause pain to some one, to do some one a service. But these excuses cannot justify a lie. That which is bad in itself cannot be permitted under any circumstances.

"Let us not do evil that there may come good." (Rom. iii, 8)

If these means were permitted, the permission would come from God. But this could not be; as God is truth itself, and every lie is directly opposed to him:

"No lie is of the truth." (1 John ii, 21)

"You [scoffers] have said: We have placed our hope in lies, and by falsehood we are protected." (Is. xxviii, 15)

"We are not to consider a lie as nothing, because we can benefit some one by lying." (S. Aug.)

3. Some, especially young people, have recourse to a lie through fear of punishment.

Ah! the severest punishment inflicted by man is nothing in comparison with the chastisement inflicted by God.

Parents should fill the minds of their children from an early hour with a great horror of this sin.

Instead, they sometimes act most unreasonably. They punish their children severely for a thoughtless, involuntary act, and they do not inflict any punishment on them when these children offend God.

4. Others excuse themselves by saying that a lie is only a venial sin.

In many cases it is true that a lie is only a venial sin, but it is always a sin, a wound inflicted on the soul, which may have very bad results. It causes a habit to be formed, and then

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." (Eccli. xix, 1)

"They are not great faults, but yet they are not without fault." (S. Aug.)

"Do not despise these small things: if you despise their weight, tremble at their number." (*Id.*)

Moreover, that sin which you consider venial, may be mortal, or it may lead you on to mortal sin.

5. Finally, others say: "The lie I tell does *no harm to any one.*"

A lie does an injury to God. It injures yourself very much. Is that nothing?

"If you tell a lie through humility and were not a sinner before you told the lie, you become one in telling it." (S. Aug.)

If you have contracted the habit of telling lies, lose no time, root it up without delay.

"The just man shall hate a lying word." (Prov. xiii, 5)

Have a horror of all lying and deceit.

"As long as breath remaineth in me, and the Spirit of God in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak iniquity, neither shall my tongue contrive lying." (Job xxvii, 3, 4)

"O ye sons of men, why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv, 3)

"Take not Thou the word of truth utterly out of my mouth." (Ps. cxviii, 43)

"In all thy works let the true word go before thee." (Eccli. xxxvii, 20).

"Thou shalt fly lying." (Exod. xxiii, 7)

"Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is evil." (Matth. v, 37)

Divisions

I

1. Lies cause us to *lose the friendship of God.*
2. They cause us to *lose the confidence of men.*
3. They *destroy our peace and tranquillity of mind* by the fear that our bad faith may be discovered.

II

1. Lying and deceit are *unworthy of an honest man,* whose character should be one of sincerity, trustworthiness, and good faith.
2. These vices are *unworthy of a Christian,* since they are clearly opposed to simplicity, sincerity, and good faith, so strongly recommended in the Gospel.

III

1. There is nothing more *opposed to the spirit of religion* than lying and deceit.
2. There is nothing more *hurtful to society,* since they are the cause of the troubles and divisions that reign there.
3. There is nothing which shows a more *corrupt mind and heart* than the habit of lying, of employing artifice and deceit in the business in which one is engaged.

LII

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

RASH JUDGMENTS

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged." (Luke vi, 37)

It is not enough to abstain from lies and calumny, we must also fear and avoid unjust suspicions and rash judgments. Consider: I. How much rash judgment is opposed to the law of God and to Christian charity; II. How baneful it is in its effects.

I. HOW MUCH RASH JUDGMENT IS OPPOSED TO THE LAW OF GOD AND TO CHRISTIAN CHARITY

To judge rashly is to judge that some one is guilty of evil and to condemn him without a reasonable cause. We must distinguish between rash judgment and unjust suspicion. Unjust suspicion consists in forming too lightly a bad opinion of another, without, however, positively condemning him. (1) Rash judgment does an injury to God who expressly forbids it, and who has reserved to Himself the right to judge mankind. (2) It inflicts real injustice on our neighbor, since it condemns him without any right to do so, and even against justice.

1. It does an *injury to God,* who has expressly forbidden us to judge one another, unless we are invested with lawful authority.

"Thou shalt not do that which is unjust, nor judge unjustly. I am the Lord." (Levit. xix, 15, 16)

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment." (John vii, 24)

"Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged." (Matth. vii, 1, 2)

"Judge not before the time; until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. iv, 5)

"He that judgeth his brother, . . . judgeth the law. . . . But who art thou that judgest thy neighbor? There is one Law-giver and Judge that is able to destroy and to deliver." (Jas. iv, 11, 13)

The abominations of Sodom and Gomorrha became so scandalous that they mounted up to the throne of God and provoked His vengeance.

What did God do? Did he instantly judge these perverse people? No, He seemed to wish to make a closer examination of the case:

"I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry that is come up to Me: or whether it be not so that I may know." (Gen. xviii, 21)

But is God not in every place, and does He not know all things? Why, then, does He say that He will "go down and see" if the thing is true?

"To give us an example, not to assume that men are guilty before we have proof of the guilt." (S. Aug.)

Rash judgment is a usurpation of the sovereign authority of God. God alone has essentially the right to judge man:

"The works of his hands are truth and judgment." (Ps. cx, 7)

"The judgments of the Lord are true." (Ps. xviii, 10)

"Thou being Master, judgest with tranquillity." (Wis. xii, 18)

"He shall judge the world with justice, and the people with His truth." (Ps. xcv, 13)

"O Lord, . . . justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne." (Ps. lxxxviii, 15)

"To judge is a shameless theft of the divine dignity, but to condemn is the destruction of one's own soul." (S. Bern.)

"If each one judges his neighbor, what shall we reserve for God?" (S. Jerome)

Jesus Christ says of Himself, as man:

"I judge not any man." (John viii, 15)

But God, His Father, has made Him Judge of the living and the dead.

"It is He who was appointed by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead." (Acts x, 42)

"He hath given all judgment to the Son." (John v, 22)

"All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." (Matth. xxviii, 18)

"He hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of Men." (John v, 27)

"And shall I assume to myself that which not even the Father has assumed?" (S. Bern.)

Rash judgment then usurps the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ.

Why judge of that which does not concern you?

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv, 4)

Must you answer to God for that person? If so, watch over him without breaking the laws of charity. If there is some foundation for the suspicion, and if you have an interest in knowing the truth, there

is no sin in suspecting evil in this way, provided you suspend your judgment until the matter is cleared up.

But how often does it not happen that you judge rashly those who are not in any way subject to you, and who, perhaps are your superiors? In this last case, rash judgment is specially deserving of blame.

"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye." (Zach. ii, 8)

"Touch ye not My anointed; and do no evil to My prophets." (Ps. civ, 15)

2. It inflicts *real injustice on our neighbor,* since it condemns him without having any right to do so, and even against all equity.

Rash judgment is directly opposed to charity, which forbids us to think evil of our neighbor without just reasons: "Charity thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. xiii, 5)

It is contrary to justice also.

Our neighbor has a right to our good opinion as long as he does nothing that is evidently bad.

We never have the right to do to another that which we should not wish another to do to us: "Do not do to another what you would not wish to be done to you." Would you wish to be condemned without cause? And what right have you to judge another?

"Let us, therefore, not judge one another any more. But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? or thou, why dost thou despise thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. xiv, 13, 10)

"So judge others that you yourself may desire to be judged by them." (S. Isidore)

The injustice becomes greater when the judgment, as often happens, is formed on evil reports, on mere surmises. We judge of the intention on mere appearances. We are influenced in our judgment by prejudice, envy, hatred, self-interest. If a man is on bad terms with another, he puts a bad construction on everything which that other says or does. Is a man urged on by envy of another, or by self-interest? He easily believes all that is said against that other; he suspects him, accuses him.

What can be more unjust than such judgments, which are formed without authority, without sufficient knowledge, without honor.

"All things are full of rash judgments. He of whom we despaired is suddenly converted, and becomes very good; he from whom we hoped many things suddenly falls away and becomes very wicked." (S. Aug.)

"Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings xvi, 7)

We criticise the real or imaginary faults of others, but are blind to our own.

"Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest." (Rom. ii, 1)

"Neglecting their own actions, they with an impudent freedom, become the censors of others." (S. Prosp.)

Each one judges others by himself:

"The fool when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools." (Eccle. x, 3)

"Be upright yourself and you will find others upright." (S. Aug.)

"An evil-minded man judges that another is what he feels himself to be." (*Id.*)

"They condemn small errors in others although they themselves have committed greater." (S. Ambr.)

II. BANEFUL EFFECTS OF RASH JUDGMENT

1. From rash judgments arise *contempt of others, pride, self-love.*

"They trusted in themselves as just, and despised others." (Luke xviii, 9)

"O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers." (*Ibid.*, 11)

From this poisoned fountain there arises an infinite number of other disorders: dissensions in families, discord in society, and especially among those who are subject to these rash judgments; jealousy between husband and wife, false reports, calumny, hatred, revenge, strife, etc.

"A hidden but very grave plague, which drives God away and destroys fraternal charity." (S. Bonav.)

2. The most deadly effect of rash judgment is that it *exposes the sinner to be condemned without mercy at the tribunal of God.* In rashly condemning your brother you have furnished to the Lord the matter of your own condemnation.

"With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matth. vii, 2)

With what tranquillity we should appear before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, if, at the hour of death, we could say (with a holy hermit) that we never judged or condemned any one without reason.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi, 31)

"Let us tear from our heart the root of rash judgment, which is usually pride or envy. Yes, rash judgment is an act of pride, like that of Lucifer:

"I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." (Is. xiv, 14)

This is how we act when we constitute ourselves judges of our neighbors.

Let us be careful to judge ourselves; let us occupy ourselves with our own amendment; let us not fix our eyes and our thoughts on the conduct of others, unless charity or the duty of our state obliges us to watch over them. In this case, let us be cautious in condemning them; let us suspend our judgment until we have accurate information.

"Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?" (Matth. vii, 3)

Let us put a good construction on the acts of others, as far as it is possible to do so.

"Let us judge charitably in doubtful matters. Regarding things that can be done from either a good or a bad motive, we should not form any judgment, lest we should dare to pass sentence on the heart of another, which we do not see." (S. Aug.)

Let us not believe too easily what we hear; we are often deceived. Who would not have believed that Joseph and Susanna were guilty? Nevertheless they were innocent.

"We should never be hasty in passing judgment, lest we judge things rashly without having considered them, lest everything we hear should excite us, lest we believe without proof reports spread at random." (S. Greg.)

"Excuse the intention if you cannot excuse the deed, and attribute it to ignorance, haste, chance." (S. Bern.)

"Charity thinketh no evil, that is, it excuses those who err, considering that they did not act with a bad intention." (Theodoret)

Divisions

I

Our judgments that are to the disadvantage of our neighbor are generally *rash judgments:*

1. *Through want of authority.* Proofs drawn from Holy Scripture.
2. *Through want of knowledge,* because

1°. We judge from appearances only.
2°. We judge of the intention by the act.
3°. We judge on the report of another.
4°. We regard idle suspicions as convincing proofs.

3. *Through want of probity.*

Justice is an essential condition for every judgment: "He has made

judgment and justice." But this condition is almost always wanting, because our judgments are influenced by prejudice, by hatred, by vexation, and especially by self-interest.

II

A Christian should never judge any one rashly, nor believe the rash judgments passed by others; justice, charity, religion, the commandments of Jesus Christ, all forbid him to do so, all condemn rash judgments.

LIII

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

IMPURE THOUGHTS AND DESIRES

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." (Deut. v, 21)

By the sixth and seventh commandments God forbids every act contrary to chastity and justice, by the ninth and tenth He forbids even desires that are opposed to these virtues. Although one may sin by desire against the other commandments also, God has not given special precepts forbidding such sins, as He has given those prohibiting desires of impurity and injustice; because the strong inclination which man has for impure pleasures and for worldly wealth, seems to be more closely united to our corrupt nature. Hence it has been in some sense necessary that the obligation under which we are to overcome this vicious inclination should be more expressly declared to us. Let us consider: I. When bad thoughts are sins; II. When they are not sins; III. Means of overcoming impure temptations.

I. WHEN BAD THOUGHTS ARE SINS

The desire of an impure act is a sin, because not alone the acts in themselves are sinful, but also the consent of the will to these acts. Simple impure thoughts are sins when the will has a part in them, when they are voluntarily entertained, when consent is given to them, when pleasure is taken in them, when one is careless in turning away from them. But sins of desire and of thought are of the same nature as the act itself. They are often accompanied by aggravating circumstances, which should be declared in confession.

"Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matth. v, 28)

As God has the right to forbid to us the love of certain things, because He has a sovereign authority over our hearts, so He has the right to forbid certain remembrances, certain thoughts, certain voluntary representations, because He is equally the Master of our intellect.

"How long shall hurtful thoughts abide in thee?" (Jer. iv, 14)

"For perverse thoughts separate from God." (Wis. i, 3)

"Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xv, 26)

The desire of evil, then, is always a sin. In fact, if the evil is not

committed, it is only because the occasion or the means of committing it are wanting; the evil would be done if it could be done: the crime, therefore, is already consummated in the heart.

"From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." (Matth. xv, 19)

This is what many Christians do not understand. They do not believe themselves guilty. They think they are preserving chastity because they are neither fornicators nor adulterers; and they count as mere trifles the many impure thoughts on which they dwell with pleasure. They do not confess these thoughts. Nevertheless,

"Dig in the wall. . . . Go in and see the wicked abominations which they commit there." (Ezech. viii, 8, 9)

"Woe to you . . . because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness." (Matth. xxiii, 27)

II. WHEN THEY ARE NOT SINS

But if the bad thoughts are not voluntary, if they are rejected, far from being sins, they are on the contrary, occasions and subjects of merit in the sight of God. As a consequence of original sin, the Lord leaves to us the combats that result from the revolt of the flesh against the spirit, in order to furnish matter for our triumphs. He supports us in these combats by His grace. We have, therefore, nothing to fear from these bad thoughts that attack us against our will; only we must reject them as quickly as possible and see that they do not become voluntary.

"One sins only by the will." (S. Aug.)

"So far, therefore, a sin is a voluntary evil, as unless it be voluntary it is not by any means a sin." (S. Aug.)

This truth should give comfort to scrupulous souls.

"There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh." (Rom. viii, 1)

During this life we must not expect a lasting peace, sheltered from the attacks of our enemies.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare." (Job vii, 1)

"We desire that there should be no concupiscences, but we cannot effect this." (S. Aug.)

No, temptation is no sin, provided we are faithful to the graces which God gives us to overcome it.

"Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." (Rom. vi, 12)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised

to them that love Him. Let no man who is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured." (Jas. i, 12–14)

Up to this point there is no sin, but if we are not careful:

"When concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death." (Jas. i, 15)

"Concupiscence indeed is not sin in the regenerated, when they do not consent to its unlawful works." (S. Aug.)

"[Therefore]: Go not after thy lusts." (Eccli. xviii, 30)

"I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul." (1 Pet. ii, 11)

III. MEANS OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS TO IMPURITY

1. To *reject bad thoughts at once,* as we shake a spark of fire off the hand the instant it touches us.

"Take away the evil of your devices." (Is. i, 16)

"My son, attend to my wisdom, . . . that thou mayst keep thoughts." (Prov. v, 1, 2)

2. To *distrust our own strength,* and to have recourse to prayer. . . .

"Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"Whose aid is to be sought for against these things, unless that of the helper in favors and in tribulations?" (S. Greg.)

"Be Thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge." (Ps. xxx, 3)

"And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was; I went to the Lord and besought Him." (Wis. viii, 21)

3. To be *mindful of the presence of God.*

"The searcher of hearts and reins is God." (Ps. vii, 10)

"Walk before me and be perfect." (Gen. xvii, 1)

"I set the Lord always in my sight." (Ps. xv, 8)

4. To *keep the truths of faith before our minds.*

"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)

5. To *meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ.*

"He loved me and delivered Himself for me." (Gal. ii, 20)

6. To *fly all idleness,* to have recourse to the most pure Virgin, to frequent the Sacraments.

If you make use of these means:—

"Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noon-day devil." (Ps. xc, 5, 6)

"The devil can bark, he can tempt, but he can bite only those who wish to be bitten." (S. Aug.)

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x, 13)

"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13)

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. x, 22)

LIV

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

UNLAWFUL DESIRES FOR TEMPORAL GOODS

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, . . . nor anything that is his." (Exod. xx, 17)

God was not satisfied with forbidding the exterior works of sin; He wished to destroy the evil in its source. Cupidity, the unlawful desire of the goods of others, is the source of injustice. This is why God forbids us by the tenth commandment: I. To wish to get possession of the goods of others by unjust means; II. To be attached to or ambitious of riches. III. Because of this prohibition we are obliged to have and to preserve the spirit of poverty and detachment from worldly goods.

I. WE ARE FORBIDDEN TO WISH TO GET POSSESSION OF THE GOODS OF OTHERS BY UNJUST MEANS

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." (Exod. xxi, 17)

Remark that this commandment forbids the desire of acquiring *unjustly* the property of another. The desire to have the property of another is not always unjust. It is sinful especially in two cases.

1. When a person wishes to get possession of the property of another *by unjust means,* such as larceny, fraud, etc.

"The desire of money is the root of all evils." (1 Tim. vi, 10)

2. When a person desires it *by failing in charity* towards his neighbor,—which happens in different ways; for example, by envying the property of the neighbor, by desiring that others might suffer losses which he could turn to his own advantage, by grieving at his abundance, by rejoicing at public calamities, or at scarcity, because he can sell his goods at a higher price.

"Those who long for the property of others are more quickly deprived of their own." (S. Greg.)

"He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent." (Prov. xxviii, 20)

II. WE ARE FORBIDDEN TO BE ATTACHED TO OR AMBITIOUS OF RICHES

Not that the desire to acquire property by just means is forbidden. Riches are not bad in themselves; what God condemns is ambition, the too great longing for earthly goods.

"It is not wealth, but his love for it, that is condemned in a rich man." (S. Greg.)

These desires are sinful, (1) because they are opposed to the end for which we were created, (2) because of the dangers to which they expose us.

1. We were *created to love God* and gain Heaven. But how much these immoderate desires of earthly goods are opposed to this sublime end!

"Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." (Matth. vi, 21)

2. As to the *dangers arising from ambition* and immoderate desire of riches, let us listen to what the great Apostle says:

"They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi, 9, 10)

This immoderate desire of riches causes men to break the law of God in many points. Indeed those who think only of accumulating wealth, will have great difficulty in giving to the work of their salvation the time, the care, and the solicitude which it demands. . . . They will neglect almsgiving, the sanctification of the Sundays and holydays of obligation, etc.

"The avarice of the rich is insatiable, it is always grasping, is never content, neither fears nor respects man." (S. Aug.)

It is very rare to find a man filled with these desires who does not sin against justice. At least he is strongly tempted to do so. Cupidity is the source of theft, deceit, unjust law-suits, etc.

"Whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members?" (Jas. iv, 1)

Example of Achab, King of Samaria, coveting the vineyard of Naboth (3 Kings xxi).

These immoderate desires are to be condemned even more in those who are already well supplied with worldly goods, and in those from whom death will soon take away all they possess. And yet there is

nothing more common than to see such people filled with the craving for more wealth.

"There is but one, and he hath not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceaseth not to labor, nor are his eyes satisfied with riches, neither doth he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor and defraud my soul of good things? In this also is vanity and a grievous vexation." (Eccle. iv, 8)

See that avaricious man; he is constantly hoarding up riches; he craves for a certain fortune, a certain sum; he deprives himself of necessaries of life in order to obtain it, in the flattering hope that he will then enjoy himself. And when at last he is going to give himself some pleasure,—death comes. . . .

"Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii, 20)

And yet who to-day acknowledges that he is grasping and avaricious?

"No one understands that he is avaricious; no one feels that he is covetous." (S. Aug.)

(See St. Francis of Sales, *Introduction,* P. 3, c. 14)

III. THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY

Besides cupidity and the immoderate longing for riches, the Gospel also forbids us to be attached to what we possess. Real and effective poverty is of counsel only; but the spirit of poverty and detachment is absolutely necessary in order to gain Heaven.

"If riches abound, set not your eyes upon them." (Ps. lxi, 11)

"If you love riches, you will perish with them." (S. Aug.)

"You cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke xvi, 13)

"Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii, 15)

"They that buy [be] as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as if they used it not." (1 Cor. vii, 30, 31)

"Being rich, He [Christ] became poor, for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich." (2 Cor. viii, 9)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. v, 3)

To acquire this spirit of poverty of which Christ speaks, it is not sufficient to be indifferent to the goods of this world. This spirit of poverty and detachment is a virtue. It must be supernatural in its beginning and in its end. It consists in three things:

1. In *being satisfied* with the state in which it has pleased God to

place us, and with the goods He gives us, to consent freely to be deprived of them if God wishes it, to bear poverty patiently.

Such were the dispositions of that holy man, Job:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21)

"If we have received good things at the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil?" (Job ii, 10)

2. To be *disposed to lose all,* to sacrifice all, rather than commit sin.

"Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent." (Eccli. xxi, 2)

3. To *value the goods of this world only in as far as they can be useful to us in the work of our salvation,* and, consequently, to prefer the smallest spiritual riches to the greatest temporal wealth.

We may then be poor in spirit in the midst of riches—just as those who are poor may draw on themselves the maledictions uttered against the rich, by an inordinate attachment to what they possess and by the ambitious desires which they cherish.

What is there more suitable to make us holy and pleasing to God, than the spirit of poverty!

In order to understand it better, consider how great an obstacle to salvation is the attachment to riches. It stifles the word of God. To speak of the happiness, of the delights of the spiritual life to a man so attached to the world, is to speak a language he does not understand.

"The sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii, 14)

This attachment puts aside the divine mysteries, places great obstacles to prayer and meditation, which nevertheless are so necessary, divides the heart between God and the creature.

"He that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided." (1 Cor. vii, 33)

The spirit of poverty and detachment procures for us temporal advantages also, tranquillity, peace, contentment, even in the greatest reverses (example of Job), while covetousness destroys the peace of heart and consumes unhappy victims. (Example of Achab, to whom Naboth refused to sell his vineyard):

"And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread." (3 Kings xxi, 4)

"Blessed is he who goes not after those things which, when possessed, are burdensome; when loved, corrupt; when lost, cause torture." (S. Bern.)

To *acquire and preserve this spirit of poverty* we must often and seriously call to mind:

1. That earthly goods are *only vanity:*
"Vanity of vanities . . . and affliction of spirit."
"They shall leave their riches to strangers, and their sepulchres shall be their houses for ever." (Ps. xlviii, 12)

2. That the *more attached we become to earthly goods, the more incapable we become of raising ourselves to those of Heaven.*
"I am become rich, I have found me an idol." (Os. xii, 8)

3. That at death it *will be very painful to leave those things which we loved so much.*
"We brought nothing into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out of it. But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. vi, 7, 8)

4. Let us gladly fulfil the *precept of alms-giving.*
"He that giveth to the poor shall not want." (Prov. xxviii, 27)
As it is by loving God that we learn to love Him, so it is by making some sacrifice of earthly goods, as occasion offers, that we learn to detach ourselves from them.

5. Finally, let us often think of *our heavenly home.* . . . "How vile the earth appears when I consider Heaven." (S. Ign.)
We have been created by God; He alone can satisfy the desires of our heart.
"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matth. vi, 33)

LV

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matth. xviii, 17)

Before commencing the explanation of the commandments of the Church I must speak of her authority, of the power she has received from Jesus Christ. I will show you: I. That the Church has power to make laws binding on all Christians; II. The end she has in view in giving us these laws.

I. THE CHURCH HAS POWER TO MAKE LAWS BINDING ON ALL CHRISTIANS

By the Church is here understood the teaching Church, the higher pastors, that is, the Pope and the bishops.

1. *Christ,* in giving us the Church as our mother, gave to her the *power to make commandments* or laws.

She regenerates us by Baptism; she makes us the adopted children of God. In our spiritual infancy she teaches us the first principles of religion; in a more advanced age she gives us wider and fuller instructions; she nourishes our soul with food in making us partake of the Holy Table.

She directs us in the way of salvation. She never abandons us. Are we lost in the way of sin, she invites us to repentance; are we sick, she visits us, and offers us the spiritual remedies established by Jesus Christ.

If the Church is our mother, we should honor and obey her; she has the right to command us.

"If then I be a father, where is my honor?" (Mal. i, 6)

2. *Our Divine Saviour deputed His Apostles and the bishops who succeeded them, to instruct and govern the faithful:*

"Going teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matth. xxviii, 19, 20)

"The Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God." (Acts xx, 28)

He gave them the authority necessary to direct the faithful in the way of salvation. He addressed to them these words:

"Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven." (Matth. xviii, 18)

And what is this power of binding consciences if not the power of making laws or commandments?

"He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me." (Luke x, 16)

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." (John xx, 21)

"Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church." (Matth. xvi, 18)

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matth. xviii, 17)

"Feed my lambs, . . . feed My sheep." (John xxi, 15, 17)

"Feed the flock of God which is among you." (1 Pet. v, 2)

"His [Christ's] power shall be from sea to sea, and from rivers even to the end of the earth." (Zach. ix, 10). Thus the Church has always used the power which Christ gave her, to make laws which she judged necessary or useful.

He who does not obey her, is a rebellious child and loses the rights which were his as a child of God.

"He who will not have the Church as his mother, cannot have God as his Father." (S. Cypr.)

To resist the Church and to struggle against what she has decreed, is to contradict the Holy Ghost.

"It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." (Acts xv, 28)

If the Church had to suffer only from those who are separated from her by schism and apostasy, her affliction would not be so great.

"If my enemy had reviled me, I would have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar." (Ps. liv, 13, 14)

But, alas! what opposition does she not meet with from those who, while calling themselves her children, trample her precepts under foot!

II. THE END THE CHURCH HAD IN VIEW IN GIVING US THESE LAWS

The Church makes laws to direct us how to put into practice the commandments of God; that is to say, to determine the time and the manner of fulfilling them.

1. She orders us to *keep holy the feasts* she has established. By this

precept she wishes us to call to mind and to honor the mysteries of our holy religion. She desires to encourage us to follow the example of the saints and to place ourselves under their protection.

2. God commands us to *sanctify the Sunday.* The Church tells us *how* we are to do so.

3. We offend God in breaking His commandments. . . . He orders us to return to Him. "Be converted to Me." (Is. xlv, 22). Jesus Christ instituted the *Sacrament of Penance,* by which we obtain pardon of our sins. The Church has fixed the time beyond which she forbids us, under severe punishment, to defer the reception of this Sacrament.

4. Christ commanded us to receive Holy Communion. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, etc." (John vi, 54)

The Church wishes us to communicate very often, but she commands us to do so at least at Easter.

5. The spirit of Christianity is a *spirit of penance and mortification.*

"If you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." (Rom. viii, 13)

"They that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v, 24)

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3)

"I chastise my body and bring it into subjection." (1 Cor. ix, 27)

Fasting and *abstinence* have always been regarded as works of mortification and penance. To lead Christians to the practice of these works, the Church has ordered the fasts of quarter-tense, the vigils, Lent, and abstinence on Fridays.

We cannot then refrain from admiring the spirit of the Church, that spirit of holiness, of wisdom, of zeal for the glory of God, of tenderness and love for her children.

There are six principal commandments of the Church (name them).

The Church has made other laws, a knowledge of which is not so necessary to the ordinary Christian, except perhaps the law which forbids us to read bad books or to join societies which she has condemned.

Although the commandments of the Church have the same object as the commandments of God, and both bind under pain of sin, yet there is some difference between them:

1°. The commandments of God oblige, even though one was threatened with some considerable loss. It is not the same with those of the Church.

2°. The commandments of God are unchangeable. The Church can change, or revoke hers; she can dispense from them.

3°. The law of God cannot be abrogated by any *contrary custom;* but custom can, in certain cases, abrogate the laws of the Church.

He who does not observe the laws of the Church commits a mortal sin,

(1) when he fails to observe them in an important matter. Alas! many Christians think little of breaking the law of fasting or abstinence. One day they will be forced to cry out: "Therefore we have erred."

(2) when he breaks those laws through contempt, in making a sacrilegious mockery of them.

(3) when the transgression is accompanied by grave scandal.

A true Christian takes care not to disobey the Church, even though his disobedience would not be a mortal sin.

"Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Heb. xiii, 17)

"The scribes and the pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do." (Matth. xxiii, 2, 3)

LVI

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH

TO HEAR MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS

The third commandment of God prescribes the sanctification of the Sunday; the first commandment of the Church tells us *how* to sanctify it.

Of all the acts of religion which man should perform, this is the only one which is of strict and grave obligation.

We shall consider the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in its relation to God and in its relation to ourselves.—I. Of all sacrifices, that of the Mass gives most glory to God. "I will sacrifice to Thee the Sacrifice of praise."—II. Of all sacrifices, that of the Mass is the most beneficial to man, and the one by which he can most efficaciously invoke the name of the Lord: "And I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv, 13)

1. OF ALL SACRIFICES THAT OF THE MASS GIVES MOST GLORY TO GOD

A sacrifice is an act of religion, by which there is offered to God a thing which, in the oblation, is destroyed or changed, to acknowledge His supreme dominion over creatures.

"It is Thou, O Lord, that hast the power of life and death." (Wis. xvi, 13)

Without sacrifice we could not give to God the perfect worship which He deserves.

God deserves our homage because of Himself and His infinite perfections; He deserves our gratitude because of the benefits which He has bestowed on us. But

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the *most glorious homage* we can render to God, because it is the most perfect holocaust that ever has been or can be offered.

2. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the *most appropriate satisfaction* we can offer to God for all the benefits we have received from Him.

1. Whatever glory man can give to God by his virtues will always

be infinitely below what God deserves. It is God, and God only, who can glorify Himself in a manner worthy of Him. But it is in the Sacrifice of the Mass that we find the only means of giving to God all the honor due to Him. For in the holy Mass we offer Him His own Divine Son, and, therefore, a victim of infinite value; or to speak more correctly, it is the Son of God who offers Himself to His Father; He is both priest and victim at the same time, and offers Himself as a holocaust, to render to His Father, in the name of all creatures, the homage that is due to His infinite majesty.

"Christ being come an High-Priest of the good things to come . . . neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix, 11, 12)

"For this He did once in offering Himself." (*Ibid.* vii, 27)

This sacrifice was offered only at one time and in one place; and yet God required a victim that would give Him glory at all times and in all places.

"In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Mal. i, 11)

This is why the adorable Son, in His infinite wisdom, found a means of perpetuating even to the end of time, the sacrifice which He offered on the cross to the glory of His Father.

"Do this in commemoration of Me." (Luke xxii, 19)

"As often as you do these things, do them in memory of Me." (Canon of the Mass)

The manner in which Christ offers Himself in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is by the ministry of His priests.

"The Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same: the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the Cross. (Council of Trent, Sess. 22, c. 2)

"Christ . . . hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." (Eph. v, 2)

"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the Holies by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. xiii, 11, 12)

It is, then, the blood of Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb, which flows on our altars and sends up towards heaven a perfume infinitely more pleasing than the smoke of the ancient sacrifices. It is, therefore, the most glorious holocaust we can offer to God.

Listen to Jesus Christ in the Sacrifice of the Mass, saying to His Father:

"Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; but Thou hast pierced

ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come." (Ps. xxxix, 7, 8)

One Mass, then, gives more glory to God than all men and even all angels could procure for Him by their holiest actions. One single Mass is, by itself, more than sufficient to atone for all the outrages God receives from sinners, because the dignity of the Victim which is offered in the Mass is greater than all the malice of men who offend God. What a powerful motive for assisting at Mass!

2. God has bestowed on us so many gifts both of nature and of grace, that we find ourselves unable to show Him a *gratitude* worthy of them. But Jesus Christ has given us the means of doing so in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation." (Ps. cxv, 12, 13)

The holy Mass is truly a *sacrifice of thanksgiving,* and in it we offer to God His only Son, the object of His love. We thus make to God a present worthy of Him, a present which not only equals, but surpasses, all the riches which we have received from Him, since it is of infinite value.

May you, then, always avail yourselves of so excellent a means of glorifying God as your Sovereign Lord, and of thanking Him as your Benefactor! But to do this you must unite yourselves to this holy Sacrifice by the respect with which you should assist at it, and the gratitude with which you should be penetrated. But in what does this respect consist? In always assisting at the holy Mass with a demeanor full of respect and with feelings of the most profound humility. Man being composed of a body and a soul, these two should contribute to honor God, each in its own manner.

"Come, let us fall down." (Ps. xciv, 2). "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." (Preface of the Mass). But do people assist at the holy Sacrifice with that respect, that humility, that gratitude, which they should bring to it? Alas! when assisting at Mass they sometimes place themselves in an unbecoming posture, they take part in profane conversations, they give all kinds of liberty to their senses, they give way to voluntary distractions. How many there are who find the time too long, who carry their want of devotion so far as to leave the church at the very time that Christ is offering Himself in sacrifice for them! What ingratitude! What impiety!

"And you have dishonored Me." (John viii, 49)

II. THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IS THE MOST BENEFICIAL TO MAN

This Sacrifice is at the same time both propitiatory and impetratory.

1. It is propitiatory, in order to appease the justice of God, irritated by the sins of man; 2. It is impetratory, in order to obtain for man all the graces he requires.

1. What more *efficacious means to appease the divine justice,* and to obtain pardon of our sins, than a sacrifice in which there is offered to God a Victim who has atoned for all the sins of the world.

"If the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix, 13, 14)

This blood is of infinite value. And it is this value of the blood of Christ which is applied to us in the holy Mass. It is offered for our reconciliation by Jesus Christ, who puts Himself in the place of sinful man.

"For them do I sanctify Myself; that they also may be sanctified in truth." (John xvii, 19)

"Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. v, 1)

The efficacy of this divine Sacrifice is so great that it can change the most hardened sinner into a great saint, if he is faithful enough in assisting at it with devotion and profiting by the graces that are attached to it.

The Sacrifice of the Mass effaces and remits the temporal punishment due to sin. This is why it is offered for the souls in Purgatory.

Sinners, assist at it then. But to obtain pardon, offer to God, with this holy Sacrifice, a humble and contrite heart.

"A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a humble and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l, 19)

"They returned striking their breasts." (Luke xxiii, 48)

Such should be your dispositions. When in the holy place strive to feel as the humble publican felt, when he dared not raise his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast while imploring the mercy of God:

"O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." (Luke xviii, 13)

Do not come to Mass to insult Jesus Christ by your dissipation and want of reverence. You would be like the Jews who said mockingly:

"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." (Matth. xxvii, 40)

"Hail, King of the Jews . . . and they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads." (*Ibid.,* 29, 39)

On the contrary, let your thoughts dwell with sorrow on His bitter passion.

"Christ having suffered in the flesh, be you armed with the same thought." (1 Pet. iv, 1)

2. *The Sacrifice of the Mass is impetratory.*

If we are to judge of the success of our requests by the credit which our advocates have with those we address, what should we not hope for from the mediation of Jesus Christ?

"Who was heard for His reverence." (Heb. v, 7)

"Always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii, 25)

Can God refuse anything to a Mediator so holy and powerful? Therefore the Church ends all her prayers with the words: "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, etc."

During the holy Mass, then, can we not with the greatest confidence demand from God all the graces of which we stand in need?

"He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how hath He not also with Him given us all things." (Rom. viii, 32)

Come, then, with confidence to the altar, on which our Divine Saviour immolates Himself. Sinners, come to demand your conversion. You, just souls, who fear to lose the treasure of grace, come to demand holy perseverance. It is difficult to obtain at any other time what we do not get then, because in the Mass our prayers are accompanied by those of Jesus Christ. In the Mass you can ask even for temporal favors. But in doing so keep God and your salvation always before your mind.

You can pray for the needs of those who are dear to you, for the souls in Purgatory, etc.

In order to render your prayers more pleasing to God, and therefore more efficacious for yourselves, assist at Mass with *modesty* and *attention*. In your intercourse with God do not imitate the carnal Jews, of whom Christ said:

"This people honoreth Me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me." (Matth. xv, 8)

"What is the meaning that My beloved hath wrought much wickedness in My house?" (Jer. xi, 15)

"What things the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary." (Ps. lxxiii, 3)

"In Thy churches I will bless Thee, O Lord." (Ps. xxv, 12)

Divisions

I

1. What is a sacrifice?
   1°. What is the Sacrifice of the Mass?
   2°. For what ends is it offered?

2. Duty of assisting at Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation. Dispositions with which we should assist.

II

1. Parish priests are obliged to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for their parishioners on Sundays and holydays of obligation.

2. Advantages to be gained by the faithful in assisting at the parochial Mass.

LVII

THE SECOND AND THIRD COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH

ANNUAL CONFESSION AND PASCHAL COMMUNION

"All the faithful of both sexes . . . shall faithfully confess their sins, at least once a year, to their own priest, . . . receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist at least at Easter." (Council of the Lateran)

We shall speak in another place of confession and holy Communion; here there is question only of the annual confession and Communion required by the commandments of the Church. Let us consider: I. To what we are obliged by the precept of the Paschal Communion; II. How we should prepare ourselves to fulfil this duty.

I. TO WHAT WE ARE OBLIGED BY THE PRECEPT OF THE PASCHAL COMMUNION

The Paschal or Easter duty is that obligation by which all the faithful who have attained to the use of reason, are bound to go to confession once a year and to communicate at Easter. In order to understand what this precept demands of us, we must consider what the Church orders by these two commandments.

1. She orders us to confess our sins *at least once a year* (*"saltem semel in anno"*). She wishes, however, that we should go to confession more frequently. The Church has made this law in order to check the tepidity and negligence of bad Catholics, lest they should remain for years in their sins, or become careless regarding the salvation of their souls.

"Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of His vengeance He will destroy thee." (Eccli. v, 8)

"To his own pastor," that is to say, the bishop, the parish priest, or, according to the present discipline of the Church, any approved priest.

The Church has not determined the exact time of this annual confession; but the precept which it imposes of communicating at Easter, makes it sufficiently clear that this confession should serve as a prepara-

tion for the Paschal Communion. Moreover, the intention of the Church in the Lenten regulation is:

"The duty of confessing should be coincident with the commencement of the fasting." (Petr. Blos.)

At what age should children go to confession?

The Church wishes her children to confess often; because he who goes to confession only once a year is hardly in a state to make that confession well.

The longer confession is deferred, the stronger grow bad habits, the more do sins increase, and the more difficult does conversion become.

2. *The Church orders us to communicate at least at Easter ("ad minus in Pascha").*

In the early ages of the Church the faithful communicated regularly every time they assisted at holy Mass. But, alas! charity grew cold, and the Church saw herself obliged to command her children to receive holy Communion at least three times a year,—at Easter, at Pentecost, and at Christmas. Finally, in the fourth Council of the Lateran, she ordered all the faithful to communicate at least at Easter, under pain of being refused admission into the Church during life, and of being deprived of Christian burial after death.

The Easter Communion should be made in the parish church.

The Church wishes her children to communicate more frequently. Those who present themselves to receive the holy Eucharist only when the precept of the Church rigorously obliges them, are as a rule hardly disposed to receive that Divine Food even at the Paschal time. It will not benefit us much to know the excellence of this Heavenly Nourishment, unless we have at the same time an ardent desire to receive it. The absence of this desire shows that one is very careless regarding salvation.

3. *The Church does not order us simply to approach the Sacraments at Easter time; she wishes us to do so worthily.*

We must, then, prepare ourselves carefully for this great act, in order to bring to it the required dispositions.

II. HOW WE SHOULD PREPARE OURSELVES TO FULFIL THIS DUTY

What preparation should we make for confession?

1. *A serious examination of conscience preceded by fervent prayer*

A man commits sins without number and forgets them. His vices

and bad habits grow always greater. He rarely goes to confession; and when he does go, it is without examination or reflection. Take care, God wishes to be merciful to you, but only on condition that you remember your sins in sorrow of soul, and sincerely repent of them:—

"You shall remember your ways and all your wicked doings with which you have been defiled; and you shall be displeased with yourselves in your own sight, for all your wicked deeds which you committed." (Ezech. xx, 43)

How is this examination to be made?

"Enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door. . . ." (Matth. vi, 6)

Prostrate at the foot of the crucifix, see if there is anything in your past confessions that must be made right. Say to God:

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

Examine, then, how you have kept the Commandments of God and of the Church, and how you have fulfilled the duties of your state of life.

2. *Sincere sorrow*

It is not enough to recall to mind the sins you have committed. "I have remembered the evils I have done," said Antiochus (1 Mach. vi, 12); and yet he did not obtain mercy. Neither is it enough to confess these sins. Judas acknowledged his guilt: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matth. xxvii, 4); yet he died impenitent.

What, then, is necessary? You must have a true sorrow for your sins, and a firm intention to abstain from sin in future; without that there is no pardon.

"Be penitent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii, 19)

"God pardons the sins of those converted to Him; He does not pardon those who are not converted." (S. Aug.)

3. *A humble and sincere confession*

Do not hide anything; and be not like the Pharisee who published his virtues and concealed his faults. Tell the kinds of sins, the number and circumstances of each kind. Make known the habits you have contracted, and the occasions that cause you to fall into sin.

"If a sick man is ashamed to speak of his disease to a physician, the latter cannot make use of the remedies necessary to effect a cure." (S. Jerome)

Do not lay the blame on others, as Adam did:

"The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Gen. iii, 12)

Acknowledge your guilt and say: "*Mea culpa.*" . . . "I [David] am he that have sinned; I have done wickedly." (2 Kings xxiv, 17)

4. Finally, penance and satisfaction

You have offended God in so many ways! You must make atonement to the divine justice as far as you can; humble yourselves, fast, pray, as much as your confessor will consider prudent.

"Our tears of repentance should bear some proportion to our guilt; a deep wound requires special and careful treatment; a severe attack of illness requires strong medicine. Let not your repentance be less than your crime." (S. Cypr.)

That is what you must do in order to fulfil your Easter duty as you should. Our Lord wishes to make the Pasch with you: "With thee I make the Pasch." (Matth. xxvi, 18)

Is it not, then, just that you should dispose yourselves as well as possible to receive Him in the Sacrament of His love?

"Prepare your hearts unto the Lord." (1 Kings vii, 3)

DIVISION

I

1°. What the Church orders by this commandment: "You shall confess all your sins, etc."

2°. To whom this confession must be made.

3°. Why the Church earnestly desires that her children should confess more frequently than once a year.

4°. At what age are children obliged to confess?

II

1°. What the Church orders by the commandment: "You shall receive holy Communion, etc."

2°. Where the Easter Communion must be made.

3°. Penalties inflicted by the Church on those who neglect to make their Easter Communion.

4°. The age at which children are obliged to go to holy Communion.

LVIII

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH

HOLYDAYS AND FEASTS OF OBLIGATION

"These are the holidays of the Lord which you must celebrate." (Levit. xxiii, 4)

The Church, in virtue of the authority which she has received from Jesus Christ, has the right to prescribe for her children certain days of solemnity. She has exercised this right and the end she proposed to herself in instituting these feasts is to give honor and glory to God, to instruct and edify the faithful. I. The feasts of our Lord:—How we should keep them; II. The Feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints:—How they should be celebrated.

I. THE FEASTS OF OUR LORD

1. The Church has instituted the feasts of Our Lord to remind us of the mysteries of His life, and to give thanks to God for them. Thus the feasts of Christmas, of the Circumcision, of the Epiphany, etc., were established to rouse the memory, the attention, the piety of the faithful regarding objects the most interesting and the most advantageous for their salvation.

Such was the object of the feasts of the Old Law also.

"Remember this day, in which you came forth out of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. . . . Thou shalt celebrate this manner of sacred rites in this month. . . . Thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: This is what the Lord did to me when I came forth out of Egypt. . . . And when thy son shall ask thee tomorrow, saying: What is this? Thou shalt answer him: With a strong hand did the Lord bring us forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exod. xiii, 3, 5, 8, 14)

Such also are the lessons which parents should teach their children on our solemn feasts.

2. On the feasts of our Lord we should: 1°. consider what Jesus Christ has done for our salvation; 2°. thank Him for it; 3°. rouse ourselves to profit it by it.

1°. For example, on the feast of the Nativity we should consider

what took place at Bethlehem, why Christ came on earth (and in like manner on the other feasts.)

2°. We should thank our Lord for what He has done for us in the mystery we are celebrating. At Christmas, for example:

"The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." (Tit. iii, 4)

3°. We should strive to profit by what Christ has done for us in the mystery we venerate. Imitate His humility, His poverty, His detachment. On each feast Christ says to us: Learn of Me . . . follow Me . . . imitate Me.

II. THE FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE SAINTS

The Church has instituted these feasts, (1) to thank God for having crowned the saints; (2) to encourage us to imitate them; (3) to gain their intercession.

1. *To thank God.* It is to Him as the Author of all holiness that our entire homage should be offered. He crowns His gifts in crowning their merits. On these feasts the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered in honor of the Saints; it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving offered to God.

2. *To encourage us to imitate the saints.* The Church says to us:

"Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown you in the mount." (Exod. xxv, 40)

3. *To gain their intercession.* The Saints are our brethren in Jesus Christ. They are the friends of God; He is pleased to hear them when they pray for us. This intercession helps us to save our souls. We have need of it.

To sanctify as we should the feasts of our Lady and the Saints, we must meditate on their virtues, placing them before our minds as our models: "To imitate what we worship is the perfection of religion." Say to yourselves then:

"Can I not do what these have done?" (S. Aug.)

Let us implore their intercession; let us pray to the Blessed Virgin or the Saint whose feast we celebrate, to obtain for us the graces we need, in order that we may imitate the virtues of which they have given us the example.

This, then, is how we should sanctify the feasts. But, alas! are they sanctified in this way? Innumerable disorders of every kind are committed, especially on the feasts of patron saints. The enemies of the Church rejoice at this.

"The enemies have seen her, and have mocked at her sabbath." (Lam. i, 7)

"Incense is an abomination to Me. The new moons, and the sab-

baths, and other festivals I will not abide, your assemblies are wicked. My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities; they are become troublesome to Me, I am weary of bearing them. And when you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away My eyes from you; and when you multiply prayer I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood." (Is. i, 13–15)

LIX

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH

THE FAST OF LENT, QUARTER-TENSE, VIGILS, AND FRIDAYS

"The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast." (Matth. ix, 15)

The Church has wisely ordered her children to perform penitential works at certain times, to teach them that they should consider their whole life as a time of penance and mortification. I. Precept regarding the fast: Lent; Quarter-tense; Vigils. II. How to fulfil this precept. Who are exempt fom the fast? III. Abstinence on Fridays.

I. PRECEPT REGARDING THE FAST

Penance is an indispensable condition of salvation: "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 5)

The precept of fasting and abstinence is very ancient in the Church, being of Apostolic tradition. Christ Himself fasted.

"When He had fasted forty days and forty nights." (Matth. iv, 2)

John the Baptist fasted in the desert:

"John came neither eating nor drinking." (Matth. xi, 18)

"It is good not to eat flesh nor to drink wine." (Rom. xiv, 21)

"We fast for forty days during the year according to Apostolic tradition, at a time suitable to us." (S. Jerome)

"There is not an island, not a continent, not a city, not a nation, not an extreme corner of the earth, where the law of fasting is not observed. Reverence the antiquity of fasting." (S. Basil)

Fasting was observed in the Old Law:

"They humbled their souls in fastings." (Judith iv, 7)

"I humbled my soul with fasting." (Ps. xxxiv, 13)

"She humbled her body with fasts." (Esther xiv, 2)

"The men of Ninive proclaimed a fast." (Jonas iii, 5)

"Prayer is good with fasting." (Tob. xii, 8)

1. *Lent*

The fast of Lent was instituted in imitation of the fast of Jesus Christ, and to prepare us to celebrate worthily the feast of Easter.

Christ fasted,—He who had never sinned, who was innocence itself. After that should we murmur against the holy rigors of Lent,—we who have so many sins to atone for, so many passions to overcome?

"If He who never sinned, fasted, how much more necessary is fasting to man, who is subject to sin?" (S. Aug.)

Easter is the time for confessing our sins, and therefore a time of penance and expiation; we must observe the law of fasting and abstinence during Lent, in order to satisfy the justice of God by the mortification of our bodies and our passions.

Lent begins on Ash-Wednesday.

"Remember, man, thou art but dust, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii, 19)

2. *Quarter-tense*

The fast of Quarter-tense was instituted to sanctify by penance the four seasons of the year, to call down the blessing of God on the goods of the earth and to thank Him for what He has already given, to obtain from the goodness of God worthy priests for His Church. There is nothing more worthy of our desires and prayers.

3. *Vigils*

The day that precedes a feast is called a vigil. In the early days of Christianity the faithful passed the night preceding a solemn feast in prayer in church. Abuses caused these pious practices to be abolished; the Church preserves only the fast. These fasts were established in order to dispose us to celebrate worthily the feasts they precede.

II. HOW WE MUST FULFIL THIS PRECEPT

1. *We must fast in a spirit of penance*

It is the spirit, that is to say, the intention, the good will, that vivifies all our Christian actions. We must fast in order to atone for our sins.

"The night is past. . . . Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness. . . . Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness." (Rom. xiii, 12, 13)

"Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bonds of wickedness." (Is. lviii, 6)

"Let the palate abstain, let the eye abstain, let the tongue abstain, let the hand abstain; much more let the soul abstain from vices and from following its own will." (S. Bern.)

"Let us specially abstain from sin, lest our fasts, like those of the Jews, be rejected by God." (S. Aug.)

2. To fasting we must join prayer and alms-giving

"Prayer is good with fasting and alms." (Tob. xii, 8)

This is why the Church redoubles her prayers during Lent and invites the faithful to give alms for some special object, each according to his means.

"This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (Mark ix, 28)

"Let us devote to virtue what we withdraw from pleasure; let the abstinence of him who fasts be the refreshment of the poor." (S. Leo)

"Give to the hungry what you withhold from the stomach." (S. Greg.)

"Sanctify ye a fast." (Joel i, 14)

All those who have completed their twenty-first year are bound under pain of mortal sin to fast on days of Quarter-tense, on vigils, and during Lent. The fast consists in taking only one meal and abstaining from flesh meat. A light *collation* is allowed in the evening. The Church, however, grants a dispensation to the sick, to the convalescent, to women who are pregnant, to wet nurses, to old people, and to those who are employed in heavy and fatiguing work.

But those who are dispensed from the fast are not exempt from the practice of other mortifications.

III. ABSTINENCE ON FRIDAYS

We are forbidden by the sixth commandment of the Church to eat flesh meat on Fridays, in order that we may practise some work of penance every week in atonement for our sins and obtain the graces of which we stand in need. It is a mortal sin to eat flesh meat on these days, because doing so is a violation in a grave matter of a wise and holy law, and often in circumstances which aggravate the disobedience to an authority established by God to govern us. And yet some dare to say: "What difference does it make to God whether I eat flesh meat or fish?" Answer: I am a Catholic, a child of the Church. (History of Eleazar, 2 Mach. vi, 18 ff.)

Some say: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man" (Matth. xv, 11); or: "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat." (1 Cor. x, 25)

These are frivolous excuses, brought forward by men of bad faith. They know, or they could easily learn, that these passages are not applicable to the matter with which we are now occupied.

The Church has chosen Friday for this abstinence because Christ died for us on that day.

People should take care not to allow themselves too much liberty in

these matters, but should submit to the authority of the Church. If a person of weak health finds it necessary to eat flesh meat on days on which it is forbidden, he should consult his bishop or his parish priest; good Catholics never fail in this duty. They know that doctors can certify flesh meat to be necessary, but cannot give a dispensation from the abstinence.

"He that is temperate shall prolong life." (Eccli. xxxvii, 34)

"See what fasting does: it cures diseases, heals, dries up running wounds, puts the demon to flight, expels bad thoughts, makes the heart clean." (S. Basil)

"Fasting is the death of vice, the life of virtue, the strength of the mind, the vigor of the soul, the unconquered leader of the Christian forces." (S. Pet. Chrys.)

"Be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth abroad seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. v, 8)

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matth. xviii, 17)

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." (Ps. cxviii, 1)

"My eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept Thy law. . . . Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, and I shall live. . . . I will keep Thy justifications; Oh, do not Thou utterly forsake me." (Ps. cxviii, 136, 77, 8)

Divisions

I

1. Fasting is *commanded,* it cannot therefore be neglected without sin.
2. It is a *light pain,* which blots out our sins in punishing us; we cannot then dispense ourselves from it without injustice to ourselves.

II

Advantages of fasting. It helps us

1. To curb our vices and passions, which urge us to sin;
2. To raise up our soul to God and to render it capable of meditating on and relishing heavenly truths;
3. To acquire the virtues necessary for us and to bring down on us the favors of Heaven. "Who by bodily fasts dost curb vices, dost raise up the mind, and dost bestow virtue and rewards," prays the Church.

LX

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matth. xix, 17)

You are not of the number of those who say: "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job. xxi, 14). You have the advantage of knowing what God and your mother the Church require of you. This is a very great advantage, but to save our souls it is not enough to know the commandments,—we must also observe them. "That servant who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii, 47). I. It is possible to observe the commandments; II. Reasons for observing them; III. Manner of observing them.

I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO OBSERVE THE COMMANDMENTS

There have been heretics who, while admitting the existence of a hell in which God punishes the transgressors of His law, dared nevertheless to assert that the observance of that law is impossible. What a paradox!

It is of faith that God does not, and cannot, command anything that is impossible.

"He could not command anything that is impossible because He is just; nor will He condemn a man for that which could not be avoided, because He is righteous." (S. Aug.)

"God has commanded, and you dare to question if it is possible to fufil the law!" (S. Chrys.)

"This commandment that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far off from thee." (Deut. xxx, 11)

The observance of the commandments is not only possible, it is also easy and pleasant.

"His commandments are not heavy." (1 John v, 3)

"My yoke is sweet and my burden light." (Matth. xi, 30)

To what, in fact, is the whole law reduced? To the love of God and of our neighbor. But is there anything sweeter or more agreeable to man than to love a God so good, so amiable, so merciful? And is not this precept of loving our neighbor as ourselves engraved in the heart of man?

"On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." (Matth. xxii, 40)

And is it difficult to observe the commandments of the Church?

Yet it would be an error to believe that we could keep them of ourselves and by our own unaided strength. Faith teaches us that we cannot keep them, at least so as to merit Heaven, unless we are aided by divine grace.

"Without Me you can do nothing." (John xv, 5)

But God is always ready to give us this grace.

"God does not command impossible things, but in commanding, He admonishes you to do what you can, and to demand what you cannot do, and He helps you to do it." (S. Aug.)

"Strengthen me, O Lord, that I may be strong; give what You command and command what You please." (S. Aug.)

"I will put my Spirit in the midst of you; and I will cause you to walk in My commandments, and to keep My judgments." (Ezech. xxxvi, 27)

If, then, there are commandments which you have not had the strength to observe, it is either because you have not asked for grace, or have placed an obstacle to it.

II. REASONS FOR OBSERVING THE COMMANDMENTS

1. The first and most powerful of all is that *these commandments come, some direct from God and others from His Church,* to whom He wishes us to listen as to Himself.

If earthly rulers have the right to enforce obedience to their laws, shall God not have the same right in regard to His laws?

"By Me kings reign." (Prov. viii, 15)

Alas! an earthly sovereign commands, and is obeyed; God exhorts, commands, and man rebels against Him.

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this. . . . They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water. . . . Thou hast burst my bonds, and thou hast said: I will not serve." (Jer. ii, 12, 13, 20)

2. The *benefits we have received from God* and those He bestows on us through His Church, are another motive for the most exact observance of the commandments, especially gratitude.

3. A third motive is the consideration of the *reward which God promises* to those who keep the commandments, and of the *punishments* to be inflicted on those who break them.

"In keeping them there is a great reward." (Ps. xviii, 12)

"Keep His precepts and commandments, which I command thee; that

it may be well with thee and thy children after thee." (Deut. iv, 40)

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My precepts and commandments." (Gen. xxvi, 4, 5)

But for us there is a reward greater than temporal blessings, which should urge us to keep them:

"Behold your reward is great in heaven." (Luke vi, 23)

"Good Master, what shall I do that I may have life everlasting? . . . If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matth. xix, 16, 17)

The only means then of saving our souls is the observance of the commandments.

"Son, keep My commandments, and thou shalt live." (Prov. vii, 2)

"You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John xv, 14)

On the other hand, the chastisements of hell will be inflicted on those who will not have kept the commandments:

"Woe to you, ungodly men, that have forsaken the law of the most high Lord." (Eccli. xli, 11)

"They are cursed who decline from Thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii, 21)

Sinners, consider which part you will choose.

III. MANNER OF OBSERVING THE COMMANDMENTS

1. We must observe the law in every point.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (Jas. ii, 10)

"These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone." (Matth. xxiii, 23)

"If any one keeps one commandment and neglects to keep another, it does him no good." (S. Aug.)

The authority of God and of the Church are equally to be respected in all the commandments. Be not then like the Pharisees, "who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." (Matth. xxiii, 24)

But be like the prophet: "Therefore was I directed to all Thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii, 128)

"I have hated all wicked ways." (Ps. cxviii, 128). "Therefore have I hated every way of iniquity." (*Ibid.*, 104)

"For not the hearers of the law are justified before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. ii, 13)

2. The *motive* which induces us to observe the law should be *supernatural and divine,* not merely human and natural. It is not sufficient

to do good, it must be done from a supernatural motive and with a pure intention.

"They that have kept just things justly, shall be justified." (Wis. vi, 11)

Moreover, it must be done in a state of grace.

"He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words." (John xiv, 24)

3. We must *persevere* in keeping the commandments.

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. x, 22)

"Much peace have they that love thy law." (Ps. cxviii, 165)

"Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is all man." (Eccle. xii, 13)

"They that fear the Lord, keep His commandments." (Eccli. ii, 21)

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth Me." (John xiv, 21)

"He that keepeth the law is a wise son." (Prov. xxviii, 7)

"He that keepeth the law is blessed." (Prov. xxix, 18)

"Give me understanding, and I will learn Thy commandments. . . . I will meditate on Thy commandments and I will consider Thy ways, . . . So shall I always keep Thy law for ever and ever." (Ps. cxviii). 73, 15, 44)

Divisions

I

The *commandments of God are not hard.* "His commandments are not heavy."

1. The breaking of them is more troublesome than their observance, because of the remorse, bitterness, and uneasiness felt by the soul that abandons itself to sin.

2. The laws of God are not more difficult than those of the world. Consider what worldlings suffer: "We have walked through hard ways, we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and of destruction." (Wis. v, 7)

3. God softens the pain by the unction of grace, which He pours into the faithful soul.

II

Our *obedience to the laws of God* and of *His Church* ought to be:

1. *Submissive,* without any murmurs regarding the commandments;

2. *Generous,* that is to say, we should obey even when difficulties are met with;

3. *General, i. e.,* extended to all the precepts.

LXI

THE FEAR OF GOD

"Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is all man." (Eccli. xii, 13)

There is nothing more necessary or beneficial for us than to fill our hearts with a holy fear of God and to keep this fear always before our eyes. Let us, then, consider: I. The motives which should inspire this fear in us; II. The advantages it procures for us; III. The confidence which should always accompany it.

I. MOTIVES

Our holy religion is a religion of love and charity, but the devotion that would wish to banish the fear of God as incompatible with confidence and love, is false and dangerous.

Three motives, drawn from the infinite perfections of God, should fill man's heart with a holy fear and turn him away from evil.

1. The *grandeur of the majesty of God,* which makes the pillars of heaven tremble, as the Scripture says, and fills the angels and saints with a respectful fear.

2. The *depths of the judgments of God,* which are unknown to us; we do not know what our eternal lot will be.

3. The *extent of the power of God.*

"Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear: for I am afraid of Thy judgments." (Ps. cxviii, 120)

"Be not afraid of them who kill the body. . . . But I will show you whom you shall fear. Fear ye Him, who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him." (Luke xii, 4, 5)

"Tobias, fearing God more than the king, . . . continued immovable in the fear of God." (Tob. ii, 9, 14)

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve Him only." (Deut. vi, 13)

"The Lord commanded that we should fear the Lord our God, that it might be well with us all the days of our life." (*Ibid.*, 24)

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but

that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways." (Deut. x, 12)

"The pillars of heaven tremble and dread at his beck." (Job xxvi, 11)

"Fear God, and depart from evil." (Prov. iii, 7)

"Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Ps. xxxiii, 12)

"With all thy soul fear the Lord." (Eccli. vii, 31)

"How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge! but there is none above him that feareth the Lord." (Eccli. xxv, 13)

"There is none greater than he that feareth the Lord." (*Ibid.*, x, 27)

"If I be a master, where is my fear?" (Malach. i, 6)

"There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful King, and greatly to be feared." (Eccli. i, 8)

"Who shall not fear Thee, O King of nations?" (Jer. x, 7)

"O Lord, I have heard Thy hearing and was afraid. . . . God will come from the south. . . . His brightness shall be as the light. . . . Death shall go before His face; and the devil shall go forth before His feet. . . . I have heard and my bowels were troubled: my lips trembled at the voice." (Habac. iii, 1 ff.)

"Fool, do you deny that He whom you call the Lord should be feared, since this name is of a power even to be feared? But how can you love unless you fear not to love? Love is due to the Father because of religion, and fear because of power." (Tert.)

"Let him who does not wish to fear, learn to do so; let him who does not wish to be uneasy for eternity, learn to be uneasy for time; blessed is the soul of him who fears the Lord." (S. Aug.)

"Fear that which is above man, and men will not terrify you: fear everlasting death, and you will not trouble yourself about the present life." (S. Aug.)

"Present fear begets everlasting security. For God is above all, and you will not fear men." (S. Aug.)

"The fear of men defers the opportunity and the act of sinning; it does not, however, change the will, but only holds it in check until it has an opportunity." (S. Lawr. Just.)

"He who fears not God, but men, easily turns aside from justice. His fear can postpone the act of sinning; it cannot take away the will to sin." (S. Chrys.)

"Just as you amuse yourselves in ignorance before engines of war: so God thunders, and you do not rise up, nor fly from the wrath to come!" (S. Chrys.)

"What is more to be feared than the power you cannot resist, than the wisdom from which you cannot be hidden? God could be feared

less if He were wanting in one or other of these perfections; but now it is absolutely necessary that you should fear Him, to whom there is wanting neither an all-seeing eye nor an almighty hand." (S. Bern.)

"Come, then, my beloved, from how great a danger mayest thou deliver thyself, from how great a fear mayest thou be freed, if thou wouldest only be always fearful, and looking for death! Make it thine aim so to live now, that in the hour of thy death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear." (*Imit.*, Bk. 1, c. 23)

II. THE ADVANTAGES IT PROCURES FOR US

1. The fear of God preserves us in innocence by filling us with a horror and a dread of sin.

2. It makes us repair the past by a sincere repentance.

3. It causes us to take precautions for the future; because this fear of an avenging God makes us provide against the severity of His justice and the punishment due to our sins. The fear of God stops the fulfilment of bad desires and sinful thoughts. But it is not limited to this: it changes the will itself. For how does sin begin and how does it end?

"They turned away their eyes that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments." (Dan. xiii, 9)

"Perhaps there is not the fear of God in this place; and they will kill me." (Gen. xx, 11)

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Ps. xiii, 3)

"My son, all the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin." (Tob. iv, 6)

"Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God." (*Ibid.*, 23)

"Behold the fear of God, that is wisdom." (Job xxviii, 28)

"There was a man simple, and upright, and fearing God, and avoiding evil." (Job i, 1)

"He will do the will of them that fear Him; and He will hear their prayer and save them." (Ps. cxliv, 19)

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments." (Ps. cxi, 1)

"The mercy of the Lord is from eternity unto eternity unto them that fear Him." (Ps. cii, 17)

"Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him." (Ps. xxxii, 18)

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. i, 7)

"The fear of the Lord hateth evil." (Prov. viii, 13)

"The fear of the Lord shall prolong days." (Prov. x, 27)

"The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life." (Prov. xiv, 27)

"The fear of the Lord is the lesson of wisdom." (Prov. xv, 33)

"By the fear of the Lord every one declineth from evil." (*Ibid.*, 27)

"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great measures without content." (*Ibid.*, 16)

"He that fears God neglects nothing." (Eccle. vii, 19)

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Eccli. i, 16)

"The fear of the Lord driveth out sin." (*Ibid.*, 27)

"Stand in justice and in fear." (Eccli. ii, 1)

"Give place to the fear of the most High; for the fear of God is all wisdom." (Eccli. xix, 18)

"The fear of God is their glory." (Eccli. xxv, 8)

"The fear of God hath set itself above all things: blessed is the man to whom it is given to have the fear of God: he that holdeth it, to whom shall he be likened? The fear of God is the beginning of His love." (*Ibid.*, 14–16)

"With him that feareth the Lord it shall go well in the latter end." (Eccli. i, 13)

"Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown." (Eccli. xxvii, 4)

"He that feareth the Lord, will do good." (Eccli. xv, 1)

"Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, and that walk in his ways." (Ps. cxxvii, 4)

"He that feareth the Lord, will receive His discipline." (Eccli. xxxii, 18)

"Our mind will more bravely despise the terrors of temporal things the more truly it subjects itself, by fear, to the Author of these things." (S. Greg.)

"A depraved mind will not be freed from its accustomed vices if it is not turned aside by fear." (*Id.*)

"It must be maintained that the soul surrounded by the fear of God as by a wall, is strong and to a certain extent invincible." (S. Cyril)

"Fear is the foundation of salvation: through fearing we shall be on our guard, through being on our guard we shall be saved." (Tert.)

"Fear is the guardian of virtue; a simple security against a fall." (S. Jerome)

"The fear of God is a two-edged sword, cutting off all evil concupiscence." (S. Ephrem)

"What man can observe justice unless he fears God?" (S. Aug.)

"As those whom love guides are better, so are many whom fear corrects." (*Id.*)

"As it is not easy for him who does not live in fear to lead a good life; so, on the other hand, it is impossible for him who lives in fear to sin." (S. Chrys.)

"It is the fear of God alone which corrects the mind, drives away sin, preserves innocence, and gives the opportunity for all good." (*Id.*)

"It is one thing to know God, another to fear Him; but it is fear, not knowledge, that begets wisdom." (S. Bern.)

"The fear of God is the first grace. Without this first grace of graces no good can flourish or last." (*Id.*)

III. THE CONFIDENCE WHICH SHOULD ACCOMPANY OUR FEAR OF GOD

The fear of God should be accompanied by confidence and love. But you may ask, how this fear of God and of His terrible judgments can be reconciled with the confidence in His infinite goodness with which religion inspires us? We have everything to hope for from God; but we have much to fear, because of our own weakness and inconstancy in virtue.

The more deeply we study our holy religion, the more we shall be convinced that, if we have anything to fear from God, it is only because we have everything to fear from ourselves.

Let the just man fear, then, because he may fall and has of himself only corruption and weakness as his inheritance. Let the sinner fear, because of his own strength he could never either rise up from his falls or turn aside the just chastisements he has merited. But let both equally abandon themselves to the goodness of God, from which they have all things to hope for.

"Offer up the sacrifice of justice and trust in the Lord." (Ps. iv, 6)

"If the Lord had a mind to kill us, He would not have received a holocaust and libations at our hands, neither would He have shown us all these things, nor have told us the things that are to come." (Judges xiii, 23)

"In the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength." (Prov. xiv, 26)

"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: because thou shalt have hope in the latter end." (Prov. xxiii, 17)

"The fear of God is the beginning of His love; and the beginning of faith is to be fast joined unto it." (Eccli. xxv, 16)

"The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days." (Eccli. i, 12)

"He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid; for He is his hope." (Eccli. xxxiv, 16)

"The fear of the Lord is like a paradise of blessing." (Eccli. xl, 28)

"There is nothing better than the fear of God; and there is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of the Lord." (Eccli. xxiii, 37)

"They that fear the Lord shall find just judgment." (Eccli. xxxii, 20)

"I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me all days, and that it may be well with them." (Jer. xxxii, 39)

"They that fear Thee shall be great with Thee in all things." (Judith xvi, 19)

"To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?" (Is. lxvi, 2)

"Perfect charity casteth out fear." (1 John iv, 18)

"That love which does not love justice, but fears punishment, is servile." (S. Aug.)

"When good is done, not through love of justice, but through fear of punishment, it is not well done." (S. Aug.)

"In as much as God is a good and indulgent Father, so must He be feared in His Majesty as our Judge." (S. Cypr.)

"Let each one consider, not what another may have suffered, but what he himself deserves to suffer. Nor should any one look upon himself as safe if his chastisement is postponed for a time; but rather let him fear the more whom the justice of God has reserved for severer punishment hereafter." (*Id.*)

"Fear is the foundation of faith and hope." (*Id.*)

"I consider, O Lord, that Thou art good, I consider that Thou art just; I love Thy goodness, I fear Thy justice; love and fear conduct me." (S. Aug.)

"When you fear hell, I dare not say: Do not fear; because the Lord says: 'Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Fear wholly: for there is nothing more to be feared; but after the fear of evil learn the love of virtue and a holy fear.'" (S. Aug.)

"Unless man begins to worship God in fear, he cannot attain to love: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' It begins therefore in chains of iron, and is made perfect in a ring of gold." (S. Chrys.)

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of salvation; charity is the fulness of the law." (S. Bern.)

"A soul endowed with fear and love, as with two arms, grasps, embraces, binds, and holds God." (S. Bern.)

"With fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Phil. ii, 12)

"Salvation shall be to them that fear My name." (Mich. vi, 9)

Divisions

I

Means of acquiring the fear of God:

1. The knowledge of our own weakness and of our inconstancy in virtue;

2. The consideration of the presence of God;

3. Serious meditation on our last end.

II

What we have to fear:

1. We have to fear Him who is above us: a God, an inexorable judge, an avenger who is just, sovereign, and all-powerful.

2. We have to fear that which is beneath us: a hell, an eternity of punishments, and an abyss of evils, into which we are in danger of being hurled each moment.

3. We have to fear that which is around us and within us: terrible enemies, the world, the devil, the flesh, that unceasingly place our salvation in danger.

III

He who fears God has nothing to fear:

1. During this *life,* in which he is under the protection of God, who defends him and makes all things contribute to his advantage;

2. *At death,* since having led an innocent life, he disarms death, the only enemy then present that could cause him fear, but which has no terrors for him;

3. *After death,* he has to expect only rewards from Him whom he has faithfully served, and for whom he has always had a filial fear.

IV

Both just and sinners have cause to fear.

1. The just know not for certain:

1°. Whether they are worthy of love or hatred, whether they are in a state of grace or in a state of sin;

2°. Whether their good works are full enough to merit Heaven;

3°. Whether they will persevere and die in a state of grace.

2. Sinners know not:

1°. Whether they have done, or ever will do, true and sincere penance;

2°. Whether they will be of the number of those who shall be

hardened and abandoned in this life on account of their infidelities, or whether they are even now of that number;

3°. Whether they shall not be cast off in the end, no matter from what cause.

This fear should make the just tremble and should fill sinners with terror.

V

1. Fear of God's justice must be always united with confidence in His mercy, lest we fall into presumption.

2. We must never separate this confidence from that fear, lest we fall into despair.

LXII

THE SERVICE OF GOD

"No one can serve two masters." (Matth. vi, 24)

We cannot unite the service of God to that of our passions, nor to that of the world: "You cannot serve God and mammon."

Unable as we are to satisfy two masters at the same time, what part should we take? Should we hesitate? Which is the greater and the better of these masters? Is it not the Lord? We must, then, give Him the preference. It is to this I wish to exhort you in showing you: I. The pressing motives which urge you to serve God; II. How you should serve Him.

I. MOTIVES

To love, fear, and serve God is the essential duty of man:

"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man." (Eccle. xii, 13)

Everything invites us to fulfil this duty: (1) The rights which God has over us; (2) our own interests.

1. *The rights which God has over us*

It was not necessary that God should draw us out of nothingness; He could have done without us. But having resolved to give us being, He could not give it to us for any other end than His own glory. He has made all things for Himself; it is, therefore, for Himself that He created man. Thus do all creatures in their own language proclaim the glory of God.

"The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge." (Ps. xviii, 1, 2)

"Ye ministers of His, that do His will." (Ps. cii, 21)

"The creature serving Thee, the Creator, is made fierce against the unjust for their punishment; and abated its strength for the benefit of them that trust in Thee." (Wis. xvi, 24)

"For every creature according to its kind, obeying Thy commandments." (Wis. xix, 6)

"Can it be much to serve Thee, whom every creature is bound to serve?" (*Imit.,* Bk. iii, c. 10)

Among all the creatures that are on earth, there is not one that can and should serve and give glory to God in as perfect a manner as man; because man alone can know the grandeur of this Supreme Being, who merits all our homage; man alone is capable of loving that infinite Goodness, who is unknown to other creatures.

What, then, is to be thought of the man who fails in this duty? Alas! he is an unnatural monster, who strays away from the end for which he was created. He is the more guilty in withdrawing himself from this obligation, in as much as, to induce him to fulfil it, God has placed all other creatures at his service:

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? . . . Thou hast set him over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields, the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea." (Ps. viii, 5–9)

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii, 10)

But, alas! man seems to have received the *privilege* of knowledge and liberty only that he might revolt against the Author of his being.

"Thou hast said: I will not serve." (Jer. ii, 20)

Some find their glory in the service of the great ones of this world. And yet, what master can be compared to God, who is essentially great and mighty?

"O God, who shall be like unto Thee? . . . Thou alone art the most High over all the earth." (Ps. lxxxii, 2, 19)

"To serve God is to reign. Let him who loves to reign remain firmly subject to the one God, who reigns over all." (S. Aug.)

David found more honor in being a servant of God, than in his own royal dignity:

"I am Thy servant." (Ps. cxviii, 125)

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord, thy God, and walk in His ways, and love Him, and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" (Deut. x, 12)

"Fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth and with your whole heart, for you have seen the great works which He hath done among you." (1 Kings xii, 24)

"Thou hast done well with Thy servant, O Lord." (Ps. cxviii, 65)

"If the sun, and the moon, and the stars serve God, why do I not serve Him? The heavens serve Him, and the earth does not serve Him, and unhappy man does not serve Him!" (S. Jerome)

"You are at the same time a slave and a free man; a slave, because

you have been created; a free man, because you are loved by God; the soul over which He alone has dominion is most free." (S. Aug.)

"To be a servant of God is of great dignity and merit." (S. Jerome)

"There is no dignity greater than that of a servant of Christ." (S. Ambr.)

"For this we were created, that we might be good and serve our Creator; when we act against His commands, we act against nature." (S. Paulin.)

"This service [of God] is not a burden, but an honor; instead of stamping the brand of servitude, it blots it out." (S. Pet. Chrys.)

"This is the glory of man to persevere and remain in the service of God." (S. Iren.)

"He is the Creator, you are the creature; you are the servant, He is the Lord; He is the potter, you are the vessel which He has shaped; all that you are, therefore, you owe to Him from whom you have all, especially to Him, the Lord, who has both created you and done well to you." (S. Bern.)

"A faithful servant pleases you, O man, and you do not wish to be faithful to God; do you who have a servant remember that you yourself have a Master." (S. Aug.)

2. *It is our own interest to serve God*

God does not demand our service for His own interest. If He receives glory from the submission and the services which He requires of His creatures, He will not receive it less from the avenging justice which He will exercise on those who break His law.

"Every creature, willing or unwilling, is subject to one God and Lord; but we are warned that we must serve God with our whole will, since the just man serves freely, but the unjust serves as one bound in fetters." (S. Aug.)

It is, then, our interest to labor in serving Him. But what advantages, what happiness do we find in the service of God?

1°. The most solid happiness in this life; 2°. eternal happiness in the next.

1°. *The most solid happiness in this life*

What benefits do we not gain, even in this life, by fidelity in the service of God? We experience all the tenderness of a loving Providence, always careful to provide for our needs.

"Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, that walk in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee. . . . Behold thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." (Ps. cxxvii, 1–4)

"Behold the birds of the air, for they do not sow . . . and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? . . . Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." (Matth. vi, 26)

It is true that worldly prosperity is not always bestowed on virtue: God sometimes even deprives His servants of it, to make them know that He reserves for them a more solid and lasting happiness. But then, He bestows on them abundant graces, which soften the bitterness of the sorrows that come on them; He fills them with an unction, a peace, a tranquillity of soul, which surpass all the joys and pleasures of this earth, and makes them say:

"Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be abject in the house of my God, rather than dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." (Ps. lxxxiii, 11)

"I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations." (2 Cor. vii, 4)

"Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness." (Ps. xx, 4)

"Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee." (Ps. xxx, 20)

"It is good for me to adhere to my God." (Ps. lxxii, 28)

"Take my yoke upon you, . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light." (Matth. xi, 29, 30)

"And you will find rest for your souls: wonderful novelty! He who takes the yoke finds rest." (S. Basil)

"Thou hast given gladness in my heart." (Ps. iv, 7)

"It is a great happiness to be a servant of God, even though in fetters." (S. Aug.)

"The tears of penitents are sweeter than the joys of the theatre." (*Id.*)

"My tears ran down, and it was well with me." (*Id.*)

2°. *Eternal happiness in the next life*

In the next life eternal happiness will be our reward for fidelity in the service of God here below: a reward the most certain, the most abundant, the most lasting.

A reward the most certain, because of the knowledge which God has of our services, and of His fidelity to His promises. This is what consoled the Apostle:

"I suffer, but I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him, against that day." (2 Tim. i, 12)

"I have fought a good fight. . . . As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day." (2 Tim. iv, 7, 8)

A reward the most abundant. It will be nothing less than God Himself:

"I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great." (Gen. xv, 1)

"I dispose to you a kingdom." (Luke xxii, 29)

And what does God demand of us in order to give us so abundant a reward? Nothing that is beyond our strength. Nothing that we cannot easily do with the help of the grace which He freely gives us. Nothing that does not become sweet and pleasant to those that love Him.

"His commandments are not heavy." (1 John v, 3)

"He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." (Rom. xiii, 8)

"Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law." (*Ibid.*, 10)

Can we refuse to purchase it at this price, especially when we remember that it is a most lasting reward?

"The reward of God continueth for ever." (Eccli. xviii, 22)

"If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall My minister be. If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honor." (John xii, 26)

"Blessed are the servants, whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them." (Luke xii, 37)

"Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. xxv, 21)

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it reposes in Thee." (S. Aug.)

"O blessed service of God, thou art true freedom! O servitude, excelling all earthly power or command! In thee is real joy, such joy as could not be found in the possession of all the kingdoms of this world. In the glory of sovereignty there is no such thing as real joy or happiness." (Cassiod.)

II. HOW WE MUST SERVE GOD

To serve God as He deserves to be served, is not only to give Him a worship of religion, by which we acknowledge His supreme dominion over all creatures. That is the adoration which is due to Him, but it is not enough; we must also serve Him: "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matth. iv, 10). To serve God, then, is something more than to adore Him: it is to devote ourselves wholly to Him, to prefer Him to all else, to fulfil His holy will

in all things. 1. We must give our whole service to God: "Him only shalt thou serve"; 2. We must serve Him with joy and fervor: "Serve the Lord with gladness." (Ps. xcix, 2)

1. *We must give our whole service to God*

God wishes for an undivided service, and justly so. He is the only sovereign who has the right to demand our whole service. He cannot suffer any rival to share with Him the glory that is due to Him alone. It would then be doing an injury to Him to rob Him of any portion of that glory. If you choose the service of the God of Heaven, you must renounce the service of the world, of the devil, and of your passions. In vain will you present sacrifices to God with one hand, if with the other you offer incense to Baal.

"For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" (2 Cor. vi, 14, 15)

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him only: to Him thou shalt adhere." (Deut. x, 20)

"If I be a Father, where is My honor? and if I be a Master, where is My fear, saith the Lord." (Mal. i, 6)

"Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." (Matth. xxii, 21)

"He that is not with Me, is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth." (Luke xi, 23)

Why, then, deliberate so much on the part which you should take?

"How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." (3 Kings xviii, 21)

"Fear the Lord, and serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart. . . . But if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, you have your choice; choose this day that which pleaseth you, whom you would rather serve. . . . And the people answered, and said: God forbid that we should leave the Lord, and serve strange Gods." (Jos. xxiv, 14–16)

"I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord the God of heaven." (Jonas i, 9)

"The soul that serves God governs the body in the right way; and hence reason subject to God Himself rules virtuously over lust and other vices. When man does not serve God, the mind cannot have proper command over the body, nor can human reason rule over the passions." (S. Aug.)

"No one can in one and the same thing serve the omnipotent God, and be pleasing to His enemies." (S. Greg.)

"There is nothing that can or should be preferred to Him, because He is true God and true Father." (S. Paulin.)

2. *We must serve God joyfully*

God wishes us to serve Him with joy and fervor. He does not, as a rule, demand heroic deeds from us, but He wishes our fervor to supply that which our feebleness does not permit us to do.

"God gives the reward, not to the number and magnitude of the works, but to the cheerful intention and most fervent will." (S. John Clim.)

"It is not the cost of the offerings that pleases God, but the love with which they are offered." (Salvian)

He loves those who serve Him with joy.

"Not with sadness, or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix, 7)

To serve God with joy and fervor is to walk with gladness in the way of His commandments, to exercise ourselves in good works, to surmount with courage the difficulties we encounter in the path of virtue, to be assiduous in prayer, to frequent the Sacraments, to be always resigned, submissive to the holy will of God,—in a word, to have no other intention in all our actions than to please God and do all for His honor and glory.

"Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and fearing God, and avoiding evil?" (Job i, 8)

"Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season?" (Matth. xxiv, 45)

"That servant is faithful who preserves an inextinguishable fervor, who each day until the end of his life, never ceases to add fire to fire, fervor to fervor, desire to desire, and endeavor to endeavor." (S. John Clim.)

"I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." (Ps. cxviii, 32)

"The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day." (Prov. iv, 18)

"In all thy works be quick." (Eccli. xxxi, 27)

"In all thy works keep the pre-eminence." (Eccli. xxxiii, 23)

"Hast thou seen a man swift in his work? he shall stand before kings." (Prov. xxii, 29)

"In carefulness not slothful; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord." (Rom. xii, 11)

"I consider fervor to be an ardent, firm, constant desire of pleasing God in all things." (S. Basil)

"The more the soul loves God, the more quickly does it run to and the sooner will it reach Him, and advancing towards God, such a loving soul will not be repelled, nay, rather would I say, it will not brook delay." (S. Bern.)

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." (Wis. iv, 13)

"He completed much time, not indeed by the number of years, but by the inextinguishable devotedness of mind in advancing." (S. Bern.)

Such is the character of the true and fervent servants of God. Very different from those slothful, careless, and lazy servants who serve Him only with weariness, who find the yoke of the Lord too heavy, who are always complaining of the difficulties they find in His service, who fear to do too much and become discouraged at the smallest obstacle that presents itself. If they pray, it is without attention. If they frequent the Sacraments, they draw no profit from them. The mere mention of penance, fast, mortification, makes them afraid. If you are one of those careless and lazy servants, listen and tremble:

"I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc. iii, 15, 16)

"Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully." (Jer. xlviii, 10)

"Cursed is the deceitful man that . . . making a vow, offereth that which is feeble to the Lord: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts." (Malach. i, 14)

"My soul hath slumbered through heaviness." (Ps. cxviii, 28)

"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou rise out of thy sleep?" (Prov. vi, 9)

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." (Prov. xix, 15)

"The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness." (Matth. xxv, 30)

"No matter how well we may have lived, no matter what progress we may have made, let no one say, it is sufficient for me, I am just; where he says, it is sufficient, there he remains fixed." (S. Aug.)

"Remember, it is the violent, not the tepid nor the slothful, that bear away the kingdom of heaven." (S. Aug.)

"Fire and tepidity do not abide in the same dwelling-place, especially since tepidity is accustomed to cause God Himself to vomit." (S. Bern.)

"Let us, therefore, cast off this pernicious tepidity, which is accustomed to make God vomit." (*Id.*)

"The Lord cares not for the tepid; He watches over the perfect." (S. Ambr.)

"When we lead careless, tepid lives, it is said that God does not watch over us." (S. Basil)

"Doth the seat of iniquity stick to thee, who framest labor in commandment?" (Ps. xciii, 20)

"Why do you frame labor in commandment? Is not the labor in commandment feigned? is not the burden light, the yoke sweet, the cross anointed?" (S. Bern.)

"Our fervor and progress ought to be every day greater; but now it is esteemed a great matter if a man can retain some part of his first fervor." (*Imit.*, B. i, c. 3)

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity." (Apoc. ii, 4)

"If thou givest thyself to fervor, thou shalt find great peace, and shalt feel less labor. (*Imit.*, B. i, c. 25)

"Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep." (Rom. xiii, 11)

"For the charity of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v, 14)

"In doing good let us not fail." (Gal. vi, 9)

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. v, 16)

"That we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him, all our days." (Luke i, 74, 75)

Divisions

I

1. *Why we are obliged to serve God.*

Men may be induced by indifferent motives to serve those with whom they live in this life. With some, it is the glory they gain in serving the great ones of the world; with others, it is the personal interest they find in such service; children serve their parents through gratitude; friends render service to friends because of the joy and pleasure they find in the bonds of friendship; finally, there are some who serve through necessity and in order to fulfil the duties of their state. But all these motives should induce us to serve God.

1°. There is nothing greater or more glorious than the service of God.

2°. There is nothing more just and indispensable.

3°. There is nothing more full of true pleasure and profit.

2. *We must serve God only.*

What does it mean to serve God only? It means:

1. to do nothing against Him;
2. to serve Him in preference to all else;
3. to serve our neighbor for God's sake, because He wishes it and as He wishes it.

II

1. *We ought to serve God faithfully,*

1°. Because at Baptism we renounced the devil, his works, and his pomps, in order to attach ourselves entirely to the service of God;

2°. because we were created and placed in this world to serve Him;

3°. because our whole happiness consists in loving and serving Him.

2. To serve Him well, we must

1°. observe His commandments exactly;

2°. refer all our actions to His glory, and have in view no other object than to work for Him;

3°. have a sincere intention never to offend Him nor to quit His service.

III

We ought to serve God because He is the best of all masters.

1. He is an indulgent master, who commands us to do nothing that is above our strength, nothing that is harsh or too difficult; who considers the affections and the will more than the greatness and number of the deeds. (What do not men have to suffer from worldly masters!)

2. He is a Master full of kindness and goodness, who alleviates all our pains by the unction of his grace, who has been able to assure us in all truth that "His yoke is sweet and His burden light."

3. He is a generous Master, who keeps an account of all our services, and does not await another life to reward us for them, but recompenses us abundantly even in this life by the consolation and joy He makes us feel in the fulfilment of our duties.

IV

1. The *grandeur of this divine Master* requires us to serve Him as fervently as possible.

2. The *magnificence of the reward* which we expect deserves that we should employ both body and soul in serving Him and spare nothing in His service.

3. The *advantages* which fervor procures for us should urge us to become fervent:

1°. It makes *smooth the road* to Heaven, which is sometimes represented as rough and difficult;

2°. it causes us to *advance* more and more in the way of perfection;
3°. it makes us to *persevere* in the service of God.

V

Sad effects of tepidity.

1. It inflicts injury on God.

As the dignity and grandeur of the master whom one serves, constitute the glory of those who have the honor of being in his service, so a lazy and careless manner in serving him dishonors him and shows that his servants have little fear or esteem for him. Thus God has always rejected sickly victims which are a figure of tepid souls: "You brought in of rapine the lame, and the sick, and brought in an offering: shall I accept it at your hands?" (Malach. i, 13)

2. Tepidity is full of danger for us.

1°. Because, being languid, we are not in a good state to resist our enemies;

2°. Because God withdraws Himself from us in proportion as we withdraw ourselves from Him; He withholds His graces from us, and at last vomits us forth from His mouth.

3°. Because from languor we pass to drowsiness, to that insensibility that soon leads to death.

3. The state of tepidity is injurious to our neighbor, who is easily persuaded by the example of tepid people that he need not be exact in observing the laws of morality, nor in fulfilling his obligations, nor so attached to the service of God; as if God required nothing more of us than that we should not openly violate His commandments. It is thus that little by little people relax their efforts to advance in virtue, fall into tepidity, forget that to belong to God only half is, so to say, not to be His at all, since "no one can serve two masters."

LXIII

SANCTIFYING GRACE

"God hath called us by His holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. i, 9)

All the means which God makes use of for our sanctification are included under the name of grace. Grace is a supernatural gift which God freely bestows on us for our sanctification, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ.

"Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii, 24)

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i, 17)

There are two kinds of grace, habitual or sanctifying grace, and actual grace. Consider: I. Sanctifying or habitual grace; its excellence; the riches which it procures for man; II. What should be done to preserve grace?

I. EFFECTS OF SANCTIFYING GRACE

Sanctifying grace dwells in us, purifies us from sin, and makes us just and holy in the sight of God. This grace dwells in the soul of the just man as long as he remains free from mortal sin. There is nothing in this world that can be compared to the beauty of a soul in the state of grace; its beauty is so ravishing, even in the eyes of God Himself, that it becomes the object of His love:

"If any man love Me . . . we will come to him, and make our abode with Him." (John xiv, 23)

"Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee." (Cant. iv, 7)

"My delights were to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii, 31)

That soul is a tabernacle in which God dwells.

"Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God?" (1 Cor. vi, 19)

Woe to him who would look with contempt on a soul in the state of grace, and still greater woe to him who would scandalize it.

"Jesus, calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them,

and said: . . . He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . See that you despise not one of these little ones." (Matth. xviii, 2, 6, 10)

How foolish, then, are those who turn pious people into ridicule. Let them compare the happy state of these holy souls with that in which they themselves are, separated from God, dreadful to look at, condemned to hell. Ah! they will one day cry out:

"We fools esteemed their life madness," etc. (Wis. v, 4)

"God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace." (1 Pet. v, 5)

1. Who could understand to what a *degree of glory and honor* sanctifying grace raises the soul that has the happiness to receive it? It makes men the friends of God:

"I will not now call you servants, . . . I have called you friends." (John xv, 15)

It renders them His adopted children:—

"That we should be called, and should be the sons of God." (1 John iii, 1)

Brethren of Jesus Christ:

"He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii, 11)

"Go, tell my brethren. . . . Go to my brethren." (Matth. xxviii, 10; John xx, 17)

Heirs of God, co-heirs with Jesus Christ:

"If sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii, 17)

It renders us in some manner participators in the nature and the perfections of God:

"He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i, 4)

"O wonderful condescension of the divine goodness! We are not worthy to be called servants, and we are called friends." (S. Greg.)

"He pleased God and was beloved, . . . for his soul pleased God." (Wis. iv, 10, 14)

"The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." (Rom. viii, 16)

"You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba (Father)." (Rom. viii, 15)

"He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi, 17)

"I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii, 20)

"The divine motherhood would not have done her any good if Mary had not borne Christ more fruitfully in the heart than in the flesh." (S. Aug.)

"This gift exceeds all others, namely, that God should call man son, and man should call God, Father." (S. Leo.)

2. Sanctifying grace not only enriches the soul with all the gifts that constitute holiness: lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity, etc.; it has another inestimable advantage also, it *sanctifies, perfects, ennobles, makes divine* in a certain sense, the good works of him who has the happiness to possess it. Everything done for God by a soul in the state of grace is sanctified by that charity which animates it, and is rendered worthy of a reward far surpassing all our ideas. Acts, the smallest and most indifferent in themselves,—a glass of water given in the name of Christ—will have their due reward.

"Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (Mark ix, 40)

This is why the Apostle recommends us to perform all our actions in a state of grace, and for the love and glory of God.

"Let all your things be done in charity." (1 Cor. xvi, 14)

"Do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x, 31)

What treasures one in the state of grace can lay up each day in Heaven!

Sanctifying grace enriches a man with all kinds of treasures.

"All good things come to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands." (Wis. vii, 11)

"Glory and honor and peace to every one that worketh good." (Rom. ii, 10)

"Joy to the right of heart." (Ps. xcvi, 11)

How happy, how greatly to be desired is the lot of the just!

"Say to the just man that it is well." (Is. iii, 10)

"I found Him [the just man says], whom my soul loveth." (Cant. iii, 4)

"He that loveth me [Christ says], shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, . . . and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." (John xiv, 21, 23)

Afflicted souls, abandoned by the world . . . let sinners glory in their riches . . . let worldlings call those who possess them happy:

"They have called the people happy that hath these things; but [in reality] happy is that people whose God is the Lord." (Ps. cxliii, 15)

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul." (Ps. lxv, 16)

"He that is good shall draw grace from the Lord." (Prov. xii, 2)

"The Lord will give grace and glory." (Ps. lxxxiii, 12)

"The wages of sin is death; but the grace of God life everlasting." (Rom. vi, 23)

"Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting." (Tit. iii, 5–7)

"The grace of God surpasses not only all the stars, and all the heavens, but even all the angels." (S. Aug.)

Poor sinners, you who have lost sanctifying grace by mortal sin—have you ever clearly understood how great that loss is?

"If thou didst know the gift of God?" (John iv, 10)

Return to God and you will see the difference between the just man and the sinner.

"You shall return, and you shall see the difference between the just man and the wicked; and between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not." (Malach. iii, 18)

"Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from My eyes. . . . If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow." (Is. i, 16, 18)

"Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him." (Apoc. iii, 20)

"Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him." (Luke xv, 22)

"Where sin abounded, grace did more abound; that as sin hath reigned to death, so also grace might reign by justice unto life everlasting." (Rom. v, 20, 21)

"Thou shalt call me, and I will answer Thee." (Job xiv, 15)

"To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely." (Apoc. xxi, 6)

"As the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul. You are not filled with the bowels of charity if you mourn over a body from which the soul has departed, and do not mourn over a soul from which God has withdrawn." (S. Aug.)

"Men would have a great reward from God, if they would do to please Him one half of what they do to please the world." (S. Thom.)

II. PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE

If you would persevere in grace, watch and pray, fly from the world, avoid light faults, especially those that are deliberate, lead a regular life, frequent the Sacraments, practice mortification and penance.

Besides these there are two other essential counsels, especially for you, cherished souls, who possess sanctifying grace:

1. Remember that this grace is a talent which must be made to bear fruit:

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." (Luke xii, 48)

"When gifts are increased, the account to be given of them also increases." (S. Greg.)

Let tepid souls pay attention to this, because,

"Not to go forward is to fall back." (S. Bern.)

"[Therefore] he that is just, let him be justified still, and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xxii, 11)

"Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." (Eccle. ix, 1)

"In truth I have learned to know that nothing is so efficacious for meriting, preserving, and recovering grace as the virtue of true and constant humility." (S. Bern.)

"The first effect of the love of God is to lead us to confess our own weakness, to acknowledge that whatever good we do, however strong we may be, we owe all to Him; that we who glory, may glory in the Lord." (S. Aug.)

2. *Make every effort to preserve this grace.* It is the most precious of all gifts; but it is easily lost in the midst of so many enemies.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor. iv, 7)

"[However] no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded." (Eccli. ii, 11)

"If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii, 31)

"Behave like men, and take courage, . . . for there are many more with us than with him." (2 Paral. xxxii, 7)

"Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii, 4)

"The grace of God is a very great security and an impregnable wall." (S. Chrys.)

"Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . For I am sure that neither death nor life," etc. (Rom. viii, 35 ff.)

"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13)

"He that hath anointed us in God; who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i, 21)

"By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God." (Eph. ii, 8)

"Let us urgently beg for divine grace, because whatever else we ask for is nothing, not that it is absolutely nothing, but that in comparison with so great a treasure, whatever else we desire is nothing." (S. Aug.)

"O Christian, understand your dignity, and being made a participator in the divine nature, do not show by your conduct that you have fallen back into your original vileness." (S. Leo)

Divisions

I

1. *Loving kindness of divine grace:*
1°. In waiting for us;
2°. In taking a favorable time and opportunity for winning us;
3°. In warning us;
4°. In asking from us what it wishes to obtain;
5°. In accommodating itself to our inclinations;
6°. In not engaging us in anything difficult without making us find therein great attraction, and without exciting in us a desire for it in spite of our repugnance.

2. *Power of grace:*
Two-fold miracle of the omnipotent power of grace.
First miracle of grace is the victory which it gains over the intellect;
Second miracle of grace is the change which it works in the heart.

II

Power and effects of grace:
1. It effaces our sins, however great and numerous they may be;
2. It bestows infused virtues and restores to us our lost merits;
3. It gives back to the sinner all the rights he had forfeited, such as the right to Heaven, the title of child of God, of temple of the Holy Ghost;
4. It makes our least actions holy, pleasing to God, and meritorious for eternal life.

III

1. *Value* and *price* of this grace which is the fruit of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ;
2. *Rank* to which it raises us: by it we become the friends and the children of God;
3. *Right* which it gives us to Heaven, as heirs of the kingdom of God.

Sinners should do all in their power to recover grace; the just should suffer all things rather than lose it.

IV

1. *Without sanctifying grace* we cannot do anything meritorious for eternal happiness, however great our works may be.

2. *With grace* we merit much, although our works may be few and insignificant, because it is grace that gives value to our acts.

LXIV

ACTUAL GRACE

"Behold I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him." (Apoc. iii, 20)

God desires all men to be saved. But man cannot work out his salvation by his own strength. God gives him help. This is called actual grace,—actual, because it is not habitual or permanent in us like sanctifying grace, but is given for each act, each particular good work. I. God gives us different graces to excite us to the love and practice of what is good. II. Wonderful effects of these graces. III. Means appointed by God for bestowing them on us. IV. How necessary this help is to us. V. We are free to resist grace, but it is very dangerous to do so.

I. GOD GIVES US DIFFERENT GRACES TO EXCITE US TO THE LOVE AND PRACTICE OF WHAT IS GOOD

God is wonderful in His gifts. He avails Himself of a great number of means to induce us to do good:

1. *Interior means.* This God of goodness makes Himself felt at first inwardly. "In wonderful and secret ways." (S. Aug.) Holy inspirations . . . lights that enlighten the mind . . . interior movements that touch and rouse the soul . . . remorse . . . fear. God acts on us by all these means:

"Because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii, 11)

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (*Ibid.*, 26)

"Whosoever are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." (*Ibid.*, 14)

"God both inspires in us the beginning of a holy will, and bestows strength and opportunity to complete what we have properly begun." (S. Prosper)

2. *Exterior means.* The reading of good books, the advice of friends, counsel of a confessor, Sacraments, sermons, sickness, death of a relative, adversity, etc.

Besides these general means the Holy Ghost has special graces,

suitable to the position and character of different persons. He calls each one in a manner which He knows to be suitable in order that they may obey Him.

"God calls him on whom He has mercy in the manner which He knows to be the most fitting, so that he who is called may not refuse." (S. Aug.)

Thus David had a good and upright heart; the Lord uses that integrity to influence him. The prophet shows him his crime under an unknown figure. David, following his natural justice, pronounces a sentence of condemnation; but all at once the prophet lays bare the mystery: "Thou art the man." (2 Kings xii, 7)

David is surprised, touched and filled with sorrow; he is converted.

"To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ." (Eph. iv, 7)

"The manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. iv, 10)

II. WONDERFUL EFFECTS OF THESE GRACES

They help us to avoid evil and to do good. In reality God is not content with enlightening us, with showing us the good we should do, and urging us to do it; He also helps us to do it; He gives us the desire, the will, the strength. He does it in us and with us.

"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." (Philip. ii, 13)

"Grace does not work without the co-operation of our will; but when we will, it works with us." (S. Aug.)

"He helps the unwilling man to will; He keeps close to the willing man that he may not will in vain." (S. Aug.)

With grace everything that God commands man to do becomes possible, sweet, and pleasant, whatever difficulties may be encountered. S. Augustine before his conversion did not believe it would ever be possible for him to practise the holy virtue of chastity; he used to say to himself: "Could you live without these?" He changed his language completely after grace had touched him, and he had begun seriously to co-operate with it.

"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Philip. iv, 13)

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

"By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace in me hath not been void." (1 Cor. xv, 10)

"Give me strength to do what You command, and command what You will." (S. Aug.)

And not only does that which God commands become possible and

easy, but so also does that which He counsels, as a vow of chastity, poverty, obedience.

"The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii, 14)

"[But] give me one who loves, and he feels what I say." (S. Aug.)

"If we shall have obtained the grace of God, no one shall prevail over us, but we shall be more powerful than all." (S. Chrys.)

III. MEANS APPOINTED BY GOD FOR BESTOWING GRACES ON US

These are: prayer and the Sacraments.

Prayer. "Ask and you shall receive." (John xvi, 24). It is not astonishing that some people have so little strength to practise virtue and avoid sin, since they either do not pray at all, or do not pray as they should.

"Hitherto you have not asked anything." (John xvi, 24)

"You know not what you ask." (Matth. xx, 22)

The *Sacraments* are the channels by which God causes His grace to flow into our souls. By some of them God purifies the soul from sin. By others, He brings it to perfection and gives it new strength to resist its enemies. Of how many graces, then, do not those deprive themselves who do not approach the Sacraments! In the eyes of men they lead virtuous lives; they assist at the religious services; all that is well:

"[But] these things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone." (Matth. xxiii, 23)

IV. HOW NECESSARY THIS HELP IS TO US

What should make us more careful and eager to have recourse to the means which God has appointed for giving us His grace, is that without grace we can neither merit eternal life, nor do any good work deserving of Heaven.

"Without me you can do nothing." (John xv, 5)

"Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii, 5)

"No man can say: The Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii, 3)

"A man cannot receive any thing, unless it be given him from heaven." (John iii, 27)

"No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw Him." (John vi, 44)

"My soul is as earth without water unto Thee." (Ps. cxlii, 6)

Without the help of grace we cannot resist any temptation so as to merit Heaven.

"By Thee I shall be delivered from temptation." (Ps. xvii, 30)

"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"We cannot fulfil the precepts of justice in every particular unless we are helped by God." (S. Aug.)

The just should not relax their efforts, but should watch and pray without ceasing.

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12)

We cannot, then, do anything without the help of grace. But can we at least merit this grace? No.

"If by grace, it is not now by works; otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi, 6)

In order to merit grace, it would be necessary to do first by our own strength some good work which would demand that God should bestow this gift on us, as an act of justice on His part. But the good work which we would do for that purpose is already due to God—and if it has been done, it has been only by the help of grace.

"When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." (Luke xvii, 10)

"What can a man merit before he receives grace? since no good work of ours is meritorious unless we have grace." (S. Aug.)

"He [God] hath mercy on whom He will; and whom He will He hardeneth." (Rom. ix, 18)

"God hath called us by His holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. i, 9)

Nevertheless we obtain an increase of grace by making good use of that which we have already received.

"Charity merits to be increased, that when increased it may deserve to be made perfect." (S. Aug.)

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Is. xii, 3)

"All you that thirst come to the waters." (Is. lv, 1)

"Who is so strong as never to give way to temptation if the Lord did not help him?" (S. Aug.)

"I stand in need of Thy grace and of great grace, to overcome nature, which is always prone to evil from her youth." (*Imit.*, B. III, c. 55)

V. WE ARE FREE TO RESIST GRACE, BUT IT IS VERY DANGEROUS TO DO SO

Grace is an interior help by which God prompts and assists us to do good. We do this good only in as far as we co-operate with grace.

Our sanctification, therefore, is the work neither of God alone nor of man alone.

"Not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor. xv, 10)

"Not the grace of God alone, nor man alone, but the grace of God with man." (S. Aug.)

"The life of such a man [*i. e.*, a good man] is not the work of man, but of God; nay, rather, of God and man: because of the grace of God operating, and the obedience of man co-operating." (S. Aug.)

"He who created us without our help, does not make us holy without our help." (S. Aug.)

"As land does not produce unless it receives rain, and as rain does not fructify without the land; so grace does not work anything without the will, and the will does nothing without grace." (S. Chrys.)

The reason why grace so often remains without effect is that those who receive it do not co-operate with it; for grace can be, and too often is, resisted. It is an article of faith that however strong and efficacious grace may be, it always leaves us at liberty to co-operate with it, or refuse to do so.

"I have called you, and you have not answered." (Jer. vii, 13)

"The liberty to believe or not to believe is placed in the will." (S. Cypr.)

"Free will is sufficient to work evil, although it cannot do any good unless assisted by the omnipotent Good." (S. Aug.)

"They have been rebellious to the light." (Job xxiv, 13)

"If any man . . . shall open to Me the door, I will come in to him." (Apoc. iii, 20)

"You always resist the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii, 51)

And yet there is nothing more dangerous than to resist the grace of God. All divine gifts are of priceless value. The smallest grace cost the Blood of Jesus Christ. God will compel you to give an exact account of all:

"Give an account of thy stewardship." (Luke xvi, 2)

"The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness." (Matth. xxv, 30)

"Why, then, didst thou not give my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have exacted it with usury?" (Luke xix, 23)

Be careful! There is one grace that will be the last one given to you.

"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof." (Matth. xxi, 43)

A very powerful motive to induce us to follow the movement of grace is, that in co-operating with it, we merit eternal life. Our trials are light, and yet they procure for us the glory of Heaven:

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

"Come to Me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth. xi, 28)

"The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii, 18)

"If any one shall say that he who is justified by good works does not truly merit eternal life, let him be anathema." (Council of Trent)

"As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me." (2 Tim. iv, 8)

Every Christian should believe that of himself he is nothing, has nothing, can do nothing, but that with the grace of God he can do all things.

"Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. ix, 16)

But God offers this grace to all. . . .

"He will have all men to be saved." (1 Tim. ii, 4)

"Christ died for all." (2 Cor. v, 15)

"Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii, 9)

But, alas! all do not wish to correspond to the merciful designs of God regarding them.

"I called, and there was no one that would hear." (Is. l, 2)

"I called and you refused; I stretched out My hand and there was no one that regarded. You have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions. I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock." (Prov. i, 24–26)

"We exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. vi, 1)

"To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv, 8)

"Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Hebr. iv, 16)

Divisions

I

We can consider *three things* in grace:

1. Its *necessity,* since without grace we cannot do anything that would merit Heaven;

2. Its being *given freely,* since, not being due to any one, God gives it when and to whom He wishes; He refuses it or withdraws it when it pleases Him to do so: we must therefore ask for it earnestly and perseveringly;

3. How *short a time* it may last. Sometimes it passes away very quickly. This is why we should pay attention to it, and profit by the favorable moment which, if once allowed to pass unheeded, will perhaps never return.

II

1. *We cannot do anything without grace:* this is the thought that should crush down all feelings of pride and self-esteem, because of the good works we do.

2. *Grace cannot do anything without our co-operation.* This is what condemns our cowardice, since we do so little good, although grace unceasingly urges us to do it; our want of correspondence to grace is the cause of its remaining without effect;

3. *We can do all things with the assistance of grace,* which will never fail us; this thought should urge us on and animate us to undertake the greatest enterprises for the glory of God.

III

1. Measures taken by grace to *convert the sinner.*

It predisposes him, and when he thinks least of it, it is waiting for a favorable time and opportunity, it enlightens his mind and softens his heart.

2. Measures which the sinner should take to render himself *faithful to grace:*

He should correspond with it promptly and willingly; he should always do what grace demands.

LXV

THE ABUSE OF GRACE

"Give an account of thy stewardship." (Luke xvi, 2)

We shall have one day to give an account to God of all the benefits we have received from Him,—riches, talents, etc. But the strictest account we shall have to give will be that of the supernatural benefits, of the graces that are given to us in order that we might merit Heaven. If we abuse the grace of God we shall be condemned with the utmost rigor. Consider: I. What is the crime of him who abuses the grace of God? II. What is his misery?

I. WHAT IS THE CRIME OF HIM WHO ABUSES GRACE

The more a man needs a thing that is offered to him, the more he is to be condemned if he despises it. The more this thing is precious in itself and gratuitous on the part of him who offers it, the more deeply this last named feels himself offended at the bad use to which it is put. From this we can judge how guilty is the soul that abuses the grace of God.

There is nothing more necessary, nothing more precious than grace, whether we consider it (1) in itself, or (2) the end for which it is given to us, or (3) what it has cost Jesus Christ to merit it for us, and the manner in which it is given to us.

1. *Considered in itself, what is grace?*

Ah! "If thou didst know the gift of God." (John iv, 10)

2. *The end for which it is given to us*

Grace is so necessary for us in order that we may merit Heaven, that without it we could not enter that blessed kingdom.

"Without Me you can do nothing." (John xv, 5)

"Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves," etc. (2 Cor. iii, 5)

But grace helps us, enlightens us, strengthens us.

"It is the characteristic of the grace of God to make known what was hidden, and to make agreeable what was unpleasant." (S. Aug.)

It is divine grace which produces in us holy inspirations, pious movements, and good desires. This grace converts sinners, enables the just

to persevere, and crowns the saints; nothing of all this could be done without it. How great, then, is the guilt of those who resist grace?

Although Almighty God could dispense altogether with men, yet by a pure effect of His love, He wishes to make them happy, and men, ungrateful towards God, blind and insensible to their own true interests, despise the heavenly gift! "That He might raise up the needy from the earth." (Ps. cxii, 7); and this miserable creature does not wish to profit by His goodness. The Lord again stretches out His hand to you:

"Arise from the dead." (Eph. v, 14)

"[But, alas!] you always resist the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii, 51)

3. *What it has cost Jesus Christ to merit grace for us*

Sinners, you do not know what grace cost. You do not know that it cost the Blood of the Son of God, that it is the fruit of His passion and death! That it is something He does not owe to you, and that it is this which makes the abuse of grace still more criminal on your part.

Of what crime, then, are you guilty when you despise grace, reject it, make a bad use of it? You are in a certain sense more guilty than the Jews, who crucified Jesus Christ.

"If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes." (Matth. xi, 21)

You deserve that God should abandon you to your unhappy lot. And yet this God of mercy does not treat you as He might. He still seeks you, He offers you His help, He urges you, He entreats you in every way:

"The manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. iv, 10)

"The Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you." (Is. xxx, 18)

"How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." (Matth. xxiii, 37)

"He who is not grateful for favors received does not deserve others." (S. Bern.)

II. WHAT IS THE MISERY OF HIM WHO ABUSES GRACE

As it is the characteristic of grace to enlighten the mind and to touch the heart, so, by a contrary effect, the abuse of it causes blindness of mind and hardness of heart.

1. In closing his eyes to the lights of grace, the sinner causes the Lord to deprive him of that grace which would enlighten him; hence his blindness. This withdrawal of lights and graces is clearly indicated in the Holy Scriptures. At one time it is a spiritual poverty in which

God leaves the sinner, at another it is a thick darkness which envelops his mind and prevents him from seeing the truth.

"We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." (Jer. li, 9)

"What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes? And now I will show you what I will do with My vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted." (Is. v, 4, 5)

"Fire hath fallen on them, and they shall not see the sun." (Ps. lvii, 9)

"They have been rebellious to the light." (Job xxiv, 13)

"I will forsake them, and will hide My face from them [the people]." (Deut. xxxi, 17)

"The reason why the grace of God comes or does not come to him, may be hidden, but cannot be unjust." (S. Aug.)

"It is a most just punishment of sin that a man should lose that of which he is unwilling to make good use; and that he who will not live a good life when he has the power to do so, should not have the power to do it when he has the will." (S. Aug.)

"They have beaten me, but I was not sensible of pain; they drew me, and I felt not." (Prov. xxiii, 35)

That soul, deprived of the grace of God, will become the slave of the devil, the plaything of its own passions; it will pursue sinful ways, it will fall from abyss to abyss, from the abyss of sin into the abyss of hell. Such are the sad effects of the abuse of divine grace. This is the evil which Christ represented to us when he wept over Jerusalem.

"He wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For . . . thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee . . . because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." (Luke xix, 41–44)

"Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." (Is. vi, 10)

2. In resisting the promptings of grace, the sinner contracts a fatal insensibility that places him in a state in which he can no longer be touched; and therefore his heart becomes hardened. It is not that the grace necessary for salvation is not given to him. His unhappy state is the result not so much of the withdrawal of grace, as of the deadly insensibility which he contracts in resisting it. By dint of resisting grace he is no longer touched by anything.

"The wicked man, when he is come into the depths of sin, contemneth." (Prov. xviii, 3)

The word of God, good example, the Sacraments,—nothing touches him. He, as it were, makes for himself a face of brass, which no longer blushes at the most shameful things. These are the hardened Pharaos, who would see the miracles of the almighty power of God, without being touched by them.

"I shall harden the heart of Pharao." (Exod. vii, 3)

"You have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock." (Prov. i, 25, 26)

"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." (Matth. xxiii, 32)

"It is proved from the word of God Himself that there is a certain limit or measure of sin; and it is clearly shown that each one will be judged sooner or later according as he fills up the measure of his sins. . . . And we are plainly taught that God bears with each one in the hope of his conversion, as long as he has not completed the number of his sins." (S. Aug.)

"The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice." (Rom. i, 18)

"They stopped their ears not to hear. And they made their heart as the adamant stone. . . . So shall they cry, and I will not hear." (Zach. vii, 11–13)

"Say not: I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin. And say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and anger quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." (Eccli. v, 4–9)

"To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv, 8)

"Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (Rom. ii, 4)

"We do exhort you [brethren], that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. vi, 1)

"Looking diligently lest any man be wanting to the grace of God." (Hebr. xii, 15)

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Kings iii, 10)

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6)

Divisions

I

Man makes use of many *stratagems to reject or to abuse the grace of God.*

1. He closes His eyes to the light of grace, he offers a formal resistance to it. "They have been rebellious to the light." (Job xxiv, 13)

2. Or, fearing to break off his attachment to creatures, and in order not to be obliged to surrender himself to the lights and the attractions of grace, he turns his mind aside and occupies himself with a thousand things that banish holy thoughts.

3. Or, not being able to hide or to withdraw himself from the lights of grace, he endeavors at least to defer his conversion, as S. Augustine did: "Soon, soon, and that soon hath no limits."

4. Or, finally, because of unworthy motives, he wishes to give himself only partly to God, imagining he can follow both God and the world, obeying grace in certain things only, and resisting it in others.

II

Measure of the graces which God has destined for each one in particular.

1. God has destined for each one of us a certain measure of graces, which are numbered and fixed; this is to be understood of special graces of choice, because He never refuses to any one the grace that is absolutely necessary for salvation.

2. This measure is not known to man, and no one can say whether the particular grace he refuses will not be the last that God has resolved to give him, after which there will be for him only ordinary graces.

3. This measure is not the same for all; there are some who were abandoned after their first refusal of grace, others after the third, etc.; what appears more certain is that God usually completes the measure only after man has failed to respond to a very great, and what may be called a critical grace.

LXVI

HOPE

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded." (Ps. xxx, 1)

If there are in religion truths capable of inspiring a just fear, there are also those that should fill us with the greatest confidence. The truth of which I am about to speak to you is of this number. I will explain to you: I. What hope is and what is its object; II. The grounds on which it rests and the obligation it imposes; III. How one sins against hope.

I. WHAT HOPE IS AND WHAT IS ITS OBJECT

Christian hope is a supernatural virtue, by which we trust, with a firm confidence, that God will give us eternal life and the means necessary to obtain it, because He has promised to do so, and is faithful to His promise.

This virtue induces us to trust entirely to God in all our needs, both spiritual and temporal.

1. *As to our spiritual needs.* We can and should hope for all that is necessary to serve God well, with confidence in Him who has said:

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." (Ezech. xxxvi, 26)

This virtue goes farther: it makes hope for Heaven with the same confidence with which we expect the graces necessary to obtain it. All can hope:

"Know ye not that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He despised him?" (Eccli. ii, 11, 12)

"Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him." (Eccli. ii, 9)

"The Lord will give grace and glory." (Ps. lxxxiii, 12)

We must place our hope in God alone.

"Where are their gods in whom they trusted? . . . Let them arise and help you, and protect you in your distress." (Deut. xxxii, 37, 38)

"God is my strong One, in Him will I trust; my shield and the horn

of my salvation; He lifted me up, and is my refuge; my Saviour, Thou wilt deliver me from iniquity." (2 Kings xxii, 3)

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." (Jer. xvii, 5)

"If my hope is in man, my hope will falter when he falters; but if I hope in God, I shall never grow weak." (S. Aug.)

2. We may and should hope for even all *temporal help* of which we have need, in order to labor efficaciously in saving our souls.

You employ your strength in gaining a living, but the fear of an illness frightens you. Continue to work in peace.

"Trust in the Lord and do good." (Ps. xxxvi, 3)

God will provide:

"Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat? . . . For your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him. . . . For your father knoweth that you have need of all these things." (Matth. vi, 31, 8, 32)

"Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (*Ibid.*, 33)

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." (1 Pet. v, 7)

If God does not always give us what we hope for, let us rest assured that He will give us what is much more useful for us.

"Do you think that anything will be wanting to a Christian, to a servant of God, to one devoted to good works? Do you think that earthly goods will be refused to him to whom heavenly and divine treasures are given? Whence this incredulous thought? What does a faithless heart do in the house of God?" (S. Aug.)

"Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he hath known My name." (Ps. xc, 14)

II. THE GROUNDS OF OUR HOPE ARE THE GOODNESS OF GOD, HIS PROMISES, AND THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST

1. *Our hope is founded on the goodness of God.* God is infinitely good; He is the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.

"His tender mercies are over all His works." (Ps. cxliv, 9)

And why should He not be inclined to do good to us? He is our Creator.

"Who ever abandons what He has made?" (S. Ambr.)

"I have made you [saith the Lord] and I will bear." (Is. xlvi, 4)

He is our Father and the best of fathers.

"There has never been so loving a father." (Tert.)

"Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of

her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Is. xlix, 15)

"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye." (Zach. ii, 8)

He is our Redeemer. He says to each one of us:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee." (Is. xliii, 1)

Not content with all these expressions so full of tender affection, this God of goodness wished also to show by parables His tender affection towards us—the parable of the Good Shepherd, of the Prodigal Son; and should we not hope!

"In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do against me." (Ps. lv, 5)

"My soul trusteth in Thee." (Ps. lvi, 1)

"Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him." (Job xiii, 15)

"The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lament. iii, 25)

2. *Our hope is founded on the promises of God.* He is faithful in fulfilling them.

"He [God] is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John i, 9)

"The Lord is faithful in all His words." (Ps. cxliv, 13)

"An oath . . . wherein God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us." (Hebr. vi, 16–18)

"[Therefore] Abraham against hope believed in hope." (Rom. iv, 18)

"Let them trust in Thee who know Thy name; for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee, O Lord." (Ps. ix, 11)

"Let no one doubt the promises of truth; let a man be what he ought to be, and immediately all things will be given to him on whose account all things were made." (S. Jerome)

3. *Finally, our hope is founded on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.* He applies them to us. They are in a certain sense ours; we must merit a reward in order to have it; but we cannot of ourselves merit infinite glory. No,

"[But] I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13)

"Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Hebr. iv, 16)

"Thy life shall be saved for thee because thou hast put thy trust in Me." (Jer. xxxix, 18)

"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (Jas. i, 6, 7)

Hope gives us courage and strength:

"He [Moses] looked unto the reward." (Hebr. xi, 26)

If you wish not to dread the labor, consider the reward.

"I consider three things in which all my hope consists: the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, and the power of the Giver." (S. Bern.)

Hope is not only advantageous to us, it is absolutely necessary.

"Turn thou to thy God . . . and hope in thy God always." (Os. xii, 6)

"Charge . . . not to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God." (1 Tim. vi, 17)

We are not, it is true, bound to make acts of hope every moment; but we are specially bound to do so in the following circumstances:

1°. On attaining the use of reason;

2°. When tempted to despair in adversity and tribulation.

"We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God. And not only so, but we glory also in tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not." (Rom. v, 2–5)

3°. When we ask some favor from God:

"Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord." (Ps. xxxi, 10)

"This is the confidence which we have towards Him, that whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John v, 14)

4°. When in danger of death:

"We have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil [heavenly happiness]." (Hebr. vi, 18, 19)

III. ONE SINS AGAINST HOPE, (1) BY DESPAIR, (2) BY PRESUMPTION

1. *By despair.* We sin by want of hope when we so far fail in it as to despair of our salvation, like Cain:

"My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." (Gen. iv, 13), or

[Like Judas] who "hanged himself with an halter." (Matth. xxvii, 5)

Behold despair and its effects: it leads to eternal reprobation.

We also sin by want of hope when we despair of overcoming our bad habits. We must say with the Apostle: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13). Or when our confidence in God fails, when we are afraid of not having what is necessary, when we entirely lose courage in our adversity and troubles.

"If thou lose hope being weary in the day of distress, thy strength shall be diminished." (Prov. xxiv, 10)

"Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow." (Matth. vi, 34)

"Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." (Ps. liv, 23)

"Be nothing solicitous: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." (Philip. iv, 6)

2. *This confidence should not, however, degenerate into presumption.* Those sin by presumption who think they are strong enough of themselves to resist temptations and the occasions of sin; who in temporal matters place their whole confidence in their industry or riches, and make no account of God's providence, who rely on the mercy of God in order to commit sin or to defer their conversion.

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

Presumption often leads to impenitence and damnation.

"Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day [presuming on the mercy of God]. For His wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." (Eccli. v, 8, 9)

"Let all our hope be in God, and let us not presume that we ourselves of our own strength can do anything, not even doing of ourselves that which is from Him, lest we lose what we have." (S. Aug.)

"In peace in the self same I will sleep, and I will rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope." (Ps. iv, 9, 10)

"It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God." (Ps. lxxii, 28)

"The Lord is my firmament and my refuge." (Ps. xvii, 3)

DIVISIONS

I

1. *Object of Christian hope:*
1°. Riches which we can receive from God.
2°. Deliverance from evils that may afflict us.

2. Characteristics and conditions of hope:
1°. It should be firm, enduring, unchangeable.
2°. It should induce man to place all his confidence in God, without,

however, causing him to neglect doing what he himself can do. This would be to tempt God.

3°. It should cause him to rejoice when he sees himself abandoned by creatures, and to be more determined to trust to the almighty power of God. This is the perfection of hope. To attain to this perfection we must remember:

a) that we cannot do anything of ourselves;

b) that we can do all things with the grace of God.

II

1. *Grounds for hoping in God and placing our whole confidence in Him.*

1°. His goodness and the love He has shown towards all, even His greatest enemies;

2°. His fidelity to His promises;

3°. Our own experience: have we not often felt His assistance?

2. *Qualities of confidence.*

1°. Our confidence should be *entire,* with regard to both spiritual and temporal blessings;

2°. It should be *prompt,* that is to say, we should have recourse to God in the first place;

3°. It should be *unchangeable,* so that if we are not heard at once, we must hope "against all hope."

III

1. *Necessity under which we are of placing all our hope in God, in whatever state of life we may be.*

1°. Everything should excite us to this hope:

a) God wishes us to hope in Him;

b) God bestows an abundant reward on those who confide in Him;

c) God is honored by hope, because by it we acknowledge that all comes from Him, that we expect everything from His goodness, and that He will not fail in His promises.

2°. Nothing should be able to shake our hope, neither the multitude of our sins, nor the power of our enemies, nor our great misery; because the goodness of God is infinite, and the merits of our Saviour are unlimited.

2. *Qualities of Christian hope.*

1°. It should be firm and immovable;

2°. Universal.

3. *Grounds of hope.*

1. The fidelity of God in keeping His promises;

2. His infinite power.

LXVII

PRAYER

ITS ADVANTAGES AND CONDITIONS

"If you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you." (John xvi, 23)

"Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke xi, 1)

"How does it happen that we are always so poor, so feeble, overwhelmed by so much misery, in spite of the promise Christ made to us: "He will give it you"? Ah! it is because we either do not pray, or our prayers are not accompanied by the conditions which would make them pleasing to God. "He who knows how to pray well, knows how to live well." (S. Aug.) In order to teach you how to live well I am going to show you how to pray well. I will show: I. To those who do not pray, the necessity and advantages of prayer; II. To those who pray badly, the conditions required for prayer.

I. NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER

(1) God wishes us to pray to Him, and has expressly commanded us to do so; and (2) even though He had not given such a command, our own interest urges us to pray to Him.

1. *God wishes us to pray to Him*

It is in praying to Him that we acknowledge God to be the Author of all good and declare our dependence on Him.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." (Luke xi, 9)

He goes farther and adds that we should pray always.

"We ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke xviii, 1)

To pray always it is not necessary that we should be constantly speaking to God. It is sufficient that we have our hearts and souls habitually raised up to Him, that we refer all our actions to Him.

However poor and weak we may be, God will listen favorably to our prayers.

"I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes." (Gen. xviii, 27)

"Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh

them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. iv, 7)

And he grants this honor of conversing with Him not only to the saints or to the just, but to all, at all times and in all places!

"Let nothing hinder thee from praying always." (Eccli. xviii, 22)

"Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke xxi, 36)

"Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. v, 17)

"Be instant in prayer; watching in it with thanksgiving." (Coloss. iv, 2)

"Let us not fear to offend by importunity, for this importunity is pleasing to God." (S. Jerome)

"Prayer is necessary every day and at every moment of the day." (Tert.)

"I will, therefore, that men pray in every place." (1 Tim. ii, 8)

2. *Our own interest urges us to pray*

God wishes to save all men; but no one can be saved without divine grace. Of ourselves we are only darkness and misery.

"Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii, 5)

Hence the necessity of grace. But God usually gives grace only in answer to prayer. As long as grace is necessary for salvation, so long will prayer be necessary to obtain the grace of salvation.

Ah! if we but knew our own poverty, there would be no need to prove to us the necessity of prayer. To what miseries are we not subject? Our fatal propensity to evil, the sinful occasions, the perils by which we are surrounded—is anything further necessary to make known to us how much we need the help of God?

"God does not command impossibilities; but in commanding He admonishes you to do what you can, and to seek for help in that which you cannot do, and He assists you to do it." (S. Aug.)

There is no good which we cannot obtain by prayer. Have recourse to prayer, then, whoever you may be, just or sinner. If you are in sin, prayer is absolutely necessary for you in order that you may come forth from the sad state in which you are. The graces of God are not due to you, especially those powerful graces that suddenly change the affections of the heart and give you the victory over the enemies of your salvation. Through pure liberality God gives you the grace of prayer; make use of that grace to demand and obtain all the others. This means of salvation is within your reach, whatever your occupation may be.

"Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee." (Ps. cxviii, 164)

Pray, then, with a truly penitent heart, a heart contrite and humble. Do not place any obstacle in the way of grace by your obstinacy in evil.

"[For] we know that God doth not hear sinners; but if a man be a server of God, and doth His will, him He heareth." (John ix, 31)

"If I have looked at iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. lxv, 18)

"Then shall they call upon Me and I will not hear; they shall rise in the morning and shall not find Me; because they have hated instruction and received not the fear of the Lord." (Prov. i, 28, 29)

"Petition made to God is a great gain, and he who begs from God receives while he begs; for to beg is the same as to receive [it is the first grace]." (S. Ambr.)

"We believe that no one can save his soul unless he is called by God, that no one called works out his salvation unless God helps him, that only he who prays merits this help." (S. Aug.)

"Do you wish that God should hear you in your prayers when you do not hear Him in his precepts?" (S. Greg.)

"He who remains in sin when he prays, does not beg from God, but mocks Him." (S. Chrys.)

If you are free from sin, prayer is necessary for you to enable you to persevere in the friendship of God. You carry grace in a fragile vessel, which may be broken at any moment. You have battles to fight, dangers to overcome.

"Combats without, fears within." (2 Cor. vii, 5)

What, then, must you do? You must pray to God:

"Lord, save us, we perish." (Matth. viii, 25)

"[Then] He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it." (Phil. i, 6)

Who are they that lead the most regular lives? They are those who pray often, and who pray as they should. How do those live who do not pray?

"I think it is clear to all that it is simply impossible to spend our time and pass through this life virtuously without the help of prayer." (S. Chrys.)

Pray, then. You note each day the hour for sleep, the time for meals, etc.; why do you not fix a time for prayer also?

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the just; and His ears unto their prayers." (Ps. xxxiii, 16)

"The prayer of the just man is the key of Heaven; prayer ascends and the mercy of God descends." (S. Aug.)

"God gives certain things, such as the beginning of faith, to those

who do not pray; other things, such as final perseverance, He gives only to those who pray." (*Id.*)

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv, 7)

II. CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR EFFICACIOUS PRAYER

If there are many who do not pray at all, there is a much greater number who pray badly.

"You ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss." (Jas. iv, 3)

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (Rom. viii, 26)

"Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name." (John xvi, 24)

(1) We should pray in the name of Jesus Christ, that is to say, we should ask for things worthy of that all-saving name;

(2) We should pray with the requisite dispositions, namely, attention, confidence, humility, and perseverance.

1. *In order to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, we must ask for those things that have reference to the glory of God and our own salvation*

Thus, sinners, you will pray in the name of Jesus Christ when you ask for the grace of conversion. Just souls, when you ask for perseverance in grace, all that He has taught you to ask for is in the Lord's prayer. You may ask for temporal favors, but only in as far as these will help you in the work of salvation.

"In those temporal matters, brethren, we warn and exhort you in the Lord not to ask for anything absolutely, but only as far as God knows it to be expedient for you." (S. Aug.)

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice." (Luke xii, 31)

Do those who ask for things that are opposed to the will of Jesus Christ, pray in His name?

"He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." (Prov. xxviii, 9)

"There is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv, 12)

"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is to say, the fruit of lips confessing to His name." (Heb. xiii, 15)

"Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father." (Eph. v, 20)

"Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life. Lest, . . . being compelled by poverty, I should steal." (Prov. xxx, 8, 9)

"Anything asked for that militates against our salvation is not asked for in the name of the Saviour." (S. Aug.)

"He is a Saviour, not only when He gives us what we ask for, but even when He does not give it; for when He sees that what is demanded is opposed to our salvation, He shows Himself a Saviour rather in not giving it." (*Id.*)

2. We should pray with the requisite dispositions

1°. *With attention.* Prayer is an elevation of the soul to God. Without attention, prayer is like a body without a soul. But, alas how do many pray?

"This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matth. xv, 8)

As regards distractions, when they are involuntary and when care is taken to avoid them, they become occasions of merit. To avoid them, or to render them involuntary, we must prepare our souls for prayer by placing ourselves in the presence of God, and keeping ourselves recollected.

"Before prayer prepare thy soul." (Eccli. xviii, 23)

"I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding." (1 Cor. xiv, 15)

"God is a spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv, 24)

"Therefore, whether we pray to God in words when necessary, or in silence, we must cry out in our hearts." (S. Aug.)

"Do you wish to speak with God? Pay attention. If you wish to be heard, do you yourself first understand what you desire to say; be not in a hurry, lest you pray in vain." (S. Ephrem.)

"I do a great injury to God when I beseech Him to hear my prayer, which I, who pour it forth, do not hear." (S. Bern.)

"If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is without fruit." (1 Cor. xiv, 14)

2°. *With confidence.* What should excite this confidence in us, is the goodness and power of God, and His fidelity to His promises.

"If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." (John xvi, 23)

"Whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive." (Mark xi, 24)

"[For God] will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer." (Ps. cxliv, 19)

In order to strengthen our confidence, let us remember that our prayers are supported by the intercession of Jesus Christ, who prays

with us and for us, and who offers His merits to the Father on our behalf."

"Always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii, 25)

"He was heard for His reverence." (Heb. v, 7)

"Christ Jesus, . . . who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii, 34)

"There is one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii, 5)

"By Him we have access both in one spirit to the Father." (Eph. ii, 18)

"He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (Jas. i, 6, 7)

"If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him." (1 John, iii, 21, 22)

"This is the confidence which we have towards Him: That, whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John v, 14)

3°. *With humility.*

The Lord has not promised anything to rebellious and obstinate sinners; He has promised to those only who pray to Him with a contrite and humble heart.

"He [God] hath had regard to the prayer of the humble, and He hath not despised their petition." (Ps. ci, 18)

God rejected the prayer of Antiochus because of his wickedness of heart.

"This wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy." (2 Mach. ix, 13)

He rejected the prayer of the Pharisee, whose heart was filled with pride. On the other hand, He was pleased with that of the Publican, because it came from a humble heart.

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke xviii, 13)

"This man went down into his house justified rather than the other." (*Ibid.*, 14)

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (Jas. iv, 6)

"The prayer of the humble and the weak hath always pleased Thee." (Judith ix, 16)

"A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l, 19)

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds,

. . . and he will not depart until the Most High behold." (Eccli. xxxv, 21)

"The prayer that is persevering and humble and fervent will undoubtedly penetrate Heaven, whence it is certain it cannot return unheard." (S. Bern.)

"Humility makes prayer pleasing." (S. Ambr.)

"To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words." (Is. lxv, 2)

4°. *With perseverance.*

God wishes us, as it were, to do violence to Him. If He granted at once what we ask for, we would cease praying. Moreover, we lose nothing by this delay. If He does not hear us at one time, He hears us at another. Example: the woman of Canaan.

"She cried out saying: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. [Jesus] answered her not a word. . . . But she came and adored Him, saying: Lord, help me. . . . Then Jesus answering said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt." (Matth. xv, 22 ff.)

"Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance and fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord." (Judith iv, 11)

"God wishes to be asked, to be forced, to be overcome by a certain importunity; therefore it is said: The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (S. Greg.)

"Fail not in prayer; God will grant what He has promised; and if He delays He does not refuse. (S. Aug.)

"When God sometimes delays granting a thing He makes His gifts more pleasing. Desires long deferred are more valued when fulfilled, those things that are soon obtained are despised." (*Id.*)

"Some things are not refused, but are deferred to a more suitable time." (*Id.*)

"Take care not to fail in prayer; if He to whom you pray, seems not to hear you, be vehement and carry violence even into Heaven itself." (S. Greg.)

"Thou art my Father: how much farther shall I go? What more shall I say? What else shall I ask? Thou art my Father." (S. Aug.)

"Give ear, O Lord, to my words, understand my cry. Hearken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God. For to Thee will I

pray: O Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear my voice." (Ps. v, 2–4)

"One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Ps. xxvi, 4)

LXVIII

PRAYER

WHEN AND FOR WHOM WE SHOULD PRAY

"We aught always to pray and not to faint." (Luke xviii, 1)

This precept must not be taken literally, but morally, that is to say, we must pray often and employ certain particular times in this holy exercise. I. When should we pray? II. For whom should we pray?

I. WHEN WE SHOULD PRAY

1. There are *days* that are *specially consecrated to prayer:* Sundays, holydays, and fast-days.

"Prayer is good with fasting and alms." (Tob. xii, 8)

2. We should pray when *exposed to temptation.*

"Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"He who has not recourse to prayer in temptation, falls." (S. Pet. Chrys.)

3. In time of *affliction* and *adversity.*

"Is any of you sad? Let him pray." (Jas. v, 13)

"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi, 20)

"In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and I cried to my God: and He heard my voice from His holy temple." (Ps. xvii, 7)

"In my trouble I cried to the Lord, and He heard me." (Ps. cxix, 1)

4. At *certain hours* of the day.

"Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee." (Ps. cxviii, 164)

"I rose at midnight to give praise to Thee." (*Ibid.,* 62)

We should often raise our hearts and souls to God by ejaculatory prayers, such as:

"Have mercy on me, O God. . . . Wash me yet more from my iniquity." (Ps. l, 1, 3)

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke xviii, 13)

"The sins of my youth and my ignorance do not remember, O Lord." (Ps. xxiv, 7)

"I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice." (Ps. cxviii, 106)

We should pray when we hear the Angelus bell, to implore the powerful intercession of the Queen of Heaven.

5. We should pray *before and after meals.* Gratitude to the Author of all good imposes this obligation on us.

"The poor shall eat and shall be filled; and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him." (Ps. xxi, 27)

6. We should pray *morning* and *evening;* this is one of the principal duties of religion. True Christians take care never to neglect it.

1°. In the *morning:*

"The wise [just] man will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High." (Eccli. xxxix, 6)

God demands the first thoughts of our mind and the first affections of our heart.

Our own interests urge us to pay this lawful debt. We should ask from God the grace to pass the day without sin or harm.

"Save us now by Thy power, that we may not turn aside to sin this day. Be pleased, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin." (Eccles. Office). In the morning we should offer all our actions of the day to God and beg Him to bless them.

"[For] unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Ps. cxxvi, 6)

"Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii, 7)

2°. In the *evening.*

There are several reasons why we should pray in the evening. (a) We should thank God for the graces He has bestowed on us during the day; (b) before going to rest we should beg of Him to forgive us the sins we have committed.

"Evening and morning and at noon I will speak and declare." (Ps. liv, 18)

The best way to say the evening prayers is to say them in common, for Christ says:

"Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matth. xviii, 2)

To the evening prayers join an examination of conscience. Detest your sins, and stir up in your hearts perfect contrition, lest death should surprise you in a state of sin, or lest, if you do not conceive a horror of sin, you should be drawn into greater faults.

"[For] sin which is not blotted out by penance soon draws on to another sin by its own weight." (S. Greg.)

"Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore is she become unstable." (Lament. i, 8)

II. FOR WHOM SHOULD WE PRAY?

Charity obliges us to pray for all men.

"I desire, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men." (1 Tim. ii, 1)

"Pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much." (Jas. v, 16)

But we are specially bound to pray:

1. *For our ecclesiastical superiors.*

"Praying withal for us." (Coloss. iv, 3)

"Brethren, pray for us." (1 Thess. v, 25)

"Peter therefore was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him." (Acts xii, 5)

2. *For the civil rulers.*

"For kings, and for all that are in high station; that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity." (1 Tim. ii, 2)

3. *For our relatives, friends, and benefactors.*

4. *For those who persecute and calumniate us.*

"Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matth. v, 44)

"That prayer in which we strive to intercede for our enemies is specially pleasing to the heart of God." (S. Greg.)

5. *For the souls in Purgatory.*

"It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (Mach. xii, 46)

But, alas! they are forgotten only too often.

People also neglect to pray for public necessities.

God complains of this by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel:

"I sought among them for a man that might set up a hedge, and stand in the gap before Me in favor of the land, that I might not destroy it; and I found none." (Ezech. xxi, 30)

"Whoever strives to intercede for others rather favors himself by his charity; and the more devoutly he pleads for others, the more quickly he deserves to be heard for himself." (S. Greg.)

Divisions

I

We pray and we are not heard. Whence comes it that our prayers

are unfruitful? It is either because we do not pray for what is necessary, or we do not pray as we should.

1. We ask either,

1°. For things that are prejudicial to our salvation; or

2°. For goods that are purely temporal and of no use in the work of salvation; or

3°. Even for supernatural graces which, from the idea we have of them, far from satisfying our souls, would remove us farther from the way of salvation.

Three truths which prove that we do not ask for what is necessary.

2. *Four conditions of efficacious prayer:*

1°. Humility,

2°. Confidence,

3°. Perseverance,

4°. Attention of mind and affection of heart.

As these conditions are often wanting in our prayers, does it not follow that we do not pray as we should?

II

1. Obligation incumbent on us of praying in the name of Jesus Christ.

1°. We should adore God. We can do so worthily only through Jesus Christ:

"Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner." (Eccli. xv, 9)

2°. We should thank God for His benefits. How shall we fulfil this duty? By "giving thanks . . . in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. v, 20)

3°. We should ask God to pardon our sins. Who but Jesus Christ can reconcile us to God? "He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii, 2)

4°. We must beg of God to give us the graces we require. In whose name shall we ask for them, if not in the name of Christ, who has merited them for us? "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." (John xvi, 23)

2. What we must do in order to fulfil this duty of prayer in a proper spirit.

1°. We must pray in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, we must believe in Him, we must have true faith.

2°. We must place our whole confidence in His infinite merits.

3°. We must pray for the things that are necessary for salvation.

4°. We must imitate the virtues practised by our Lord in prayer.

III

In order to pray well we must seriously consider *three questions:*

1. Who is He to whom we pray?
2. What are the things we ask of Him?
3. How should we ask them of Him?

IV

What should be the *object of prayer?*

We should beg of God:

1. To glorify Himself;
2. To give us His grace;
3. To give to our neighbor that which we reasonably desire for ourselves.

LXIX

THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

"Going, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matth. xviii, 19, 20)

What is the grace we receive in Baptism? Many know nothing about it. What does this grace demand of us? It is our duty to make known to you the obligations you contracted at Baptism, because Jesus Christ, when sending His ministers to baptize the people, commanded them at the same time to instruct those baptized: "Going, teach," etc. Consider: I. The excellence of the grace of Baptism, comprised in these words: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"; II. The duties which this grace imposes on us, as shown in the words: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

I. EXCELLENCE OF THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

Do you wish to know what is the grace of Baptism, and the excellence of the Sacrament by which you have been made Christians? Consider that:

"Baptism is the lustre of souls, the change of life into a better state, the correcting of the image, the most excellent of all the benefits of God." (S. Aug.)

"By whom [Jesus Christ] He hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i, 4)

It follows that by the grace of Baptism we enter into union with the most Holy Trinity:

"Partakers of the Divine Nature": (1) union with the Father whose children we become; (2) union with the Son, of whom we are made members; (3) union with the Holy Ghost, of whom we become the temples.

1. *Union with the Father*

Listen to what S. Paul says: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). (Rom. viii, 15)

Ah! my God, You are my Father, and I have the honor to be Your child: that is my title:

"He [God] hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself; according to the purpose of His will." (Eph. i, 5). Oh! who can understand such a favor!

"Behold [Ah! Christian, open your eyes], behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God." (1 John iii, 1)

But, O blindness! of all titles there is not one that is less esteemed to-day than that of Christian . . . The first disciples of Jesus Christ preferred this title to all others.

"We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God." (Rom. v, 2)

"[We who first] were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (Eph. ii, 3)

"It is the highest degree of nobility to be counted among the children of God." (S. Cyr.)

"Giving thanks to God, the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light." (Coloss. i, 12)

"Of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of His creature." (Jas. i, 18)

"You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people." (1 Pet. ii, 9)

"He hath not done in like manner to every nation." (Ps. cxlvii, 20)

"A father begets a son to succeed him when he dies; God brings forth children from His Church, not to succeed Him, but to dwell with Him." (S. Aug.)

2. *Union with the Son*

"He is the Head of the body, the Church." (Coloss. i, 18). The mystic body of Jesus Christ is His Church; He is its Head, and we are its members. The Head in whom reside all the graces that are communicated to us, and that flow unceasingly on the children of the Church, that forms apostles, doctors, virgins. It is to this Head that we have the honor of being united by Baptism, in a union so intimate that He Himself says:

"I in them and Thou [Father] in Me; that they may be made perfect in one. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given me, may be with Me." (John xvii, 23, 24)

"Be filled with wonder and joy, we are made one with Christ." (S. Aug.)

"From the old He has made something new, from being human He has made me divine [by Baptism]. (S. Greg. Naz.)

What follows from this? That, having the advantage of being members of Jesus Christ, we should live in a manner worthy of Him.

"Such some of you were; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi, 11)

"No one becomes a member of Christ unless either by Baptism in Christ or by death for Him." (S. Aug.)

"O Christian, recognize your dignity and, being made a partaker of the divine nature, do not, by an unworthy life, return to your old vileness. Be mindful of the Head and body of which you are a member; remember that, snatched from the powers of darkness, you have been translated into the light and the kingdom of God." (S. Leo)

"Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?" (1 Cor. vi, 15)

3. *Union with the Holy Ghost*

"Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?" (1 Cor. vi, 19)

The Holy Ghost, then, dwells not only in our soul, but also in our body; and it was when we were baptized that He descended invisibly on us. Well, if some one asked you: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts xix, 2); I fear very much that many would have to answer: "We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost." (*Ibid.*)

Open the eyes of Faith and you will see that the three Divine Persons took part in your Baptism. Had you merited this wonderful favor?

"Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the love of regeneration." (Tit. iii, 5)

What infinite mercy! Do we ever think of it? Alas! how many are ignorant of it, or never reflect on it!

"I have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (Mark i, 8)

"The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." (Rom. v, 5)

"It is through Baptism that we received the first fruits of the Spirit, and the beginning of another life; regeneration may be to us a seal, and a protection, and an illumination." (S. John Damasc.)

"By the power of the Holy Ghost, Our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary; and by the same Spirit of God we are made members of the Holy Catholic Church." (S. Leo)

"Withdraw, accursed spirit, from this image of God, and give place to the Holy Ghost." (Ritual)

"He breathed on them, and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John xx, 22)

II. DUTIES WHICH THIS GRACE IMPOSES ON US

By baptism we enter into a covenant with God to begin a new life of a higher and holier order. In order to fulfil the conditions of this treaty, we must keep the promises we made, and observe all that Christ commands us: "Teaching them to observe," etc. (Matth. xxvii, 20), that is to say:

"The person baptized is a debtor to the Baptism of the Gospel, that he may live according to the Gospel." (S. Basil)

But to live according to the Gospel is, (1) to avoid what it forbids, (2) to practise what it commands.

1. *To avoid what it forbids.* The first degree of Christian liberty is to avoid sin." The first liberty is to be without guilt." (S. Aug.) Although we all fail in many things: "In many things we all offend." (Jas. iii, 2), we should be very careful to avoid sins, especially those that inflict spiritual death on the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace.

"Mortal sins are those that destroy by one act: a Christian of lively faith and hope does not commit such." (S. Aug.)

A Christian should look on himself as a man dead to sin, and buried with Jesus Christ:

"For we are buried together with Him by Baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. . . . So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin." (Rom. vi, 4, 11)

"Know ye not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death?" (*Ibid.*, 3)

Have we a horror of sin? Are we fully persuaded that he who makes himself the slave of sin, is unworthy of the name of Christian?

"Those among us who are evil, are no longer called Christians." (Tert.)

If you are addicted to swearing, to drunkenness, to impurity, I dare to tell you with the holy Fathers that you are no longer a true Christian.

Is it not a deplorable thing to see sin reigning to-day in almost every state of life?

"[Many drink] iniquity like water." (Job xv, 16)

Fathers and mothers, do you guard the innocence of your dear children? Are you careful to instruct them in the duties imposed on them by the Church at the moment of Baptism?

"Preserve your Baptism, keep the Commandments of God, that when

the Lord comes to the nuptials, you may hasten to meet Him." (Ritual)

"I will pour you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness. . . . And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you." (Ezech. xxxvi, 25, 26)

"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark xvi, 16)

"If we sin wilfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins." (Heb. x, 26)

"Christians are known only by the amendment of their lives." (Tert.)

"Baptism is the death of sin, the life of virtue." (S. Cypr.)

"The law of Christ does not help us in this life, nay, rather, it accuses us, that, being under the law, we do all things against the law." (Salvian)

"It profits nothing to have a holy name, unless we lead a holy life, because a life at variance with the profession counteracts the honor of an illustrious title, by the vileness of unworthy acts." (*Id.*)

"Were you made a Christian in order to prosper in this world?" (S. Aug.)

"They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v, 24)

"If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." (1 Cor. iii, 17)

2. *To practise what it commands.* We should not only die to sin, but also live the life of Jesus Christ:

"As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ." (Gal. iii, 27)

When a man is dressed in black, or in white, he need not tell others that he is so dressed—it is easily seen. Neither had the first Christians any need of saying that they had put on Jesus Christ; it was enough to see and hear them to be convinced of it. If we are clothed with Jesus Christ, let His charity, His patience, His humility, His purity, His holiness of life, appear in our lives and works.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. xiii, 14)

We should clothe ourselves with Him outwardly in order to edify our neighbor; we should clothe ourselves with Him inwardly in order to sanctify ourselves.

"He orders us to be encompassed by Him on all sides." (S. Chrys.)

"In vain are we called Christians, if we are not imitators of Christ." (S. Leo)

"Christians have received their name from Christ; and it is most necessary that, as they are heirs of His name, they should be imitators of His virtue." (S. Bern.)

"He that saith he abideth in Him [Christ], ought himself also to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii, 6)

"All are not Israelites that are of Israel; neither are all they that are the seed of Abraham, children." (Rom. ix, 6, 7)

"He who does not imitate Jesus Christ chooses the name of Christian to no purpose; for what will it profit you to be called that which you are not, and to usurp the name of another? But if you feel a joy in being a Christian, then love and cherish those things that pertain to Christianity, and justly take the name of Christian." (S. Aug.)

"You are betrayed and discovered, O Christian, when you do one thing and profess another; faithful in name, unfaithful in works; you renounced the devil and his works, not in the presence of men, but of God and His angels; your bond is preserved in Heaven; you have already broken it, not only in words, but also in deeds, not only by the sound of your tongue, but also by the acts of your life." (*Id.*)

"If you are a Christian, imitate Jesus Christ; let not the name be to you empty and unprofitable, but rich; fill up the measure of so great a name; fill it up, I say, with works worthy of the name." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"Put forth your strength [O Christian], fight bravely. . . . Consider the agreement, attend to the condition, gain a knowledge of the warfare; the agreement to which you have solemnly pledged yourself, the condition to which you have assented, the service in which you are enrolled. You are indeed a poor soldier if you think you can conquer without fighting, or triumph without a struggle." (Tert.)

"Our mother, the Church, points out to you the example of the saints, and bids you walk in their footsteps, believe as they believed, and speak as they spoke; and since you are at a disadvantage by the sin and bad example of others, by the faith, example, and confession of others you will be saved." (S. Aug.)

"Thus you have renounced Satan, and all his works, and all his pomps." (Ritual)

Recall your holy Baptism to mind as often as you can; think of the graces you received in it, and the engagements you contracted.

"Remember your promise and never let your vigilance slacken." (S. Ambr.)

You renounced Satan. You promised to attach yourself sincerely to Jesus Christ: have you kept your word? Ah! how many times have you not broken those holy promises! Remember them to-day at the foot of the altar, and let nothing ever cause you to break them again.

"You have been baptized; recall the questions put to you at the time. What answer did you make? You renounced the devil and all his works and pomps; you renounced the world and all its luxuries and

sinful pleasures. Be faithful to your promises; you must not act as one who made a deceitful promise, as one whose response was a lie in his mouth." (S. Ambr.)

"[But] who has kept the agreement by which he voluntarily bound himself at Baptism? You renounced the devil, and yet you follow him; you renounced all his pomps, and yet you give your heart to the pomps of the world." (S. Bonav.)

"Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i, 10)

"It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they had known it, to turn back." (*Ibid.*, ii, 21)

"Be ye followers of God, as most dear children." (Eph. v, 1)

"Hold the form of sound words [and deeds]. . . . Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us." (2 Tim. i, 13, 14)

Divisions

I

1. What is the dignity of a Christian?
2. What are his obligations?

II

1. A Christian is a man separated from the world by his state.
2. A Christian is a man consecrated to God by his state.

III

1. *Excellence of Baptism.*

In order to understand this, consider three wonderful effects of the Sacrament:

1°. It draws us out of the most unhappy state, which is that of sin;

2°. It is by a pure effect of God's mercy that we have been freed from that unhappy state;

3°. Holy Baptism raises our claims and hopes even to the glorious title of children of God.

2. *Obligations imposed on us by Baptism.*

It obliges us to lead,

1°. A holy life,

2°. A mortified life,

3°. A life of unceasing vigilance over ourselves.

IV

Baptism produces *three effects:*

1. The *remission of original sin* in infants and adults, and further, in adults, the remission of actual sin and of the temporal punishment due to sin;

2. *Sanctifying grace,* with the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the infused virtues;

3. The *character* or *mark* by which the believer is distinguished from the infidel.

LXX

THE GRACE OF CONFIRMATION

DISPOSITIONS FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST

"When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me; and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning." (John xv, 26f.)

When Christ commanded His Apostles to preach the Gospel throughout the world he predicted that in discharging this duty they would incur the hatred and fury of men. What sublime courage would they not require? This courage was assured to them by the promise of our Lord that He would send the Holy Ghost, who would support them in the combat. But it was not to the Apostles alone that Christ promised the Holy Spirit; He promised Him to all the faithful, and He communicates Him with all His gifts to those who are well disposed. Prepare yourselves, then, to receive that Divine Comforter, and for this purpose: I. Recognize how much you need Him; II. Understand what dispositions you should have in order to receive so great a gift with profit.

I. HOW MUCH YOU NEED THE HOLY GHOST

There is no one who does not desire, (1) a comforter in his sorrows, (2) a physician in his sickness, (3) a protector to defend him against his enemies. But such are the offices of love which the Holy Ghost discharges towards each soul that has the happiness to receive Him, and these offices should make us understand the need we have of Him.

1. *The Holy Ghost is a comforter in sorrow*

Life is full of sorrow and suffering. Some are afflicted by sickness, others by persecutions. Where will they find consolation? It is useless to expect it from men. The Holy Ghost alone can give us true comfort in our sufferings, for as He is the source of all good, (1) He can not only make compensation to us for all our losses, but also (2) He can turn to our advantage the evils that afflict us.

1. If a soul has suffered some loss, the Holy Ghost, who visits it, makes up for that loss by a gift of far greater value: He bestows on

the soul the treasures of grace, and pours into it the salutary unction that makes all sufferings easily borne.

"There is nothing more precious than this gift of God; the soul receives other gifts from the Holy Spirit, but these profit nothing without charity." (S. Aug.)

2. The Holy Ghost will do more for this soul; He will turn to its advantage the pains and sorrows it endures. He will make it look on temporal sufferings as a sure and infallible means of gaining eternal riches; He will make it understand these words of Holy Scripture:

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

"I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation." (2 Cor. vii, 4)

For what are these compared with eternity?

"Thou gavest them Thy good Spirit to teach them." (2 Esdras ix, 20)

"Oh, how good and sweet is Thy Spirit, O Lord, in all things." (Wis. xii, 1)

"God doth not give the Spirit by measure." (John iii, 34)

"The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." (Rom. v, 5)

"Those who receive the Holy Ghost, despise the riches of earth through love of the treasures of Heaven." (S. Chrys.)

"God gives Himself to us in order that He may be loved; for God is love, and we love Him only by charity." (S. Fulgence)

"The Holy Spirit gives the pledge of salvation, the strength, the life, the light of knowledge." (S. Bern.)

2. *He is a physician in sickness*

The Holy Ghost is an all-powerful physician, who will cure our sickness. The diseases from which we should desire to be freed are our sins: diseases much more deadly than those of the body; for the soul infected with the disease of sin is in a state of death, and incapable of even desiring to be cured, if the Holy Spirit does not inspire it with that desire.

"Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii, 5)

"You are washed, you are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi, 11)

"He [the Lord] said to me: Son of man, dost thou think these bones [sinners] shall live? Prophesy concerning these bones, and say to

them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. . . . Behold I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. . . . And He said to me: Prophesy and say to the Spirit: Come, spirit, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again." (Ezech. xxxvii, 3–9)

"He that hath anointed us is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i, 21, 22)

"There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit." (1 Cor. xii, 4)

"The Holy Spirit is given to dwell in our bodies." (Tert.)

"Oh! how swift is the word of wisdom, and where God is the teacher, how quickly we learn what is taught." (S. Leo)

"The day of Pentecost is a day of propitiation, a day of forgiveness, a day of pardon." (S. Chrys.)

"The Holy Ghost is sent to complete by His power what our Saviour began, to guard what He acquired, to sanctify what He redeemed." (S. Aug.)

"I recognize the presence of the Holy Ghost by the change in my heart, when I see that which was earthly become heavenly, that which was carnal become spiritual." (S. Bern.)

3. *He is a protector against enemies*

If you fear that the enemies of your salvation may take from you the precious treasure of grace with which the Holy Ghost has enriched you, that Holy Spirit will be your protector, and will defend you against their attacks. The demon will use every effort to gain possession of your soul. "He goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The world and your own passions will tempt you. But set your mind at rest. . . .

"He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night. . . . Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge. There shall no evil come to thee." (Ps. xc, 4–10)

"Who shall know Thy thought, except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above." (Wis. ix, 17)

"My Spirit shall be in the midst of you: fear not." (Agg. ii, 6)

"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him; the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and He shall be filled with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord." (Is. xi, 2, 3)

"They [men] will deliver you up in councils. . . . Take no thought how or what to speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matth. x, 17–20)

"Now the Lord is a spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. iii, 17)

"You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of His glory." (Eph. i, 13, 14)

"The holy men of God spoke inspired by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i, 21)

"Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii, 14)

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the Spirit desireth; because He asketh for the saints according to God." (Rom. viii, 26, 27)

"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but the Spirit of power, and of love, and of sobriety." (2 Tim. i, 7)

"The Holy Ghost came in the form of tongues of fire, to signify that the Apostles were to be endowed with burning eloquence and the gift of tongues." (S. Greg.)

II. DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH WE SHOULD RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST

The Apostles withdrew into the Cenacle, where they spent ten days in retirement and prayer: "They were persevering with one mind in prayer." (Acts i, 14). That is the example you should follow in order to prepare well for the coming of the Holy Ghost into your hearts. (1) Retirement, (2) prayer, (3) purity of soul, are the dispositions He requires.

1. *Retirement*

Solitude has always been considered the most fitting place for the communication of the Holy Spirit. This is why so many holy souls have withdrawn from the world. You cannot quit the world. But you can make a few days' retreat from time to time. If you cannot do even that, you are at least obliged to make an interior retreat, to enter into yourselves and reflect seriously on your last end and on the means of attaining it. You should separate yourselves from certain dangerous companions, from occasions of sin, from this perverse world, the maxims of which are opposed to the Spirit of God.

"Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high." (Luke xxiv, 49)

"I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world

cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him." (John xiv, 16, 17)

"The Lord is not in the earthquake." (3 Kings xix, 11)

"I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." (Os. ii, 14)

"We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God." (1 Cor. ii, 12)

"The grace of the Holy Spirit does not recognize sluggish efforts." (S. Ambr.)

2. *Prayer*

The Apostles made use of this means also. How ardently they appealed to Heaven to send them down the Divine Comforter! They knew how much they needed Him. They knew He would enlighten them and give them the strength necessary to preach the Gospel; that He would sustain them against the persecution and fury of men. If you knew the need you have of this Holy Spirit, you would beseech Him with the same fervor and perseverance to come to you. But can you not feel this need? Pray then, as the Apostles prayed, and He will certainly come to you.

"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi, 13)

"Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive." (John xvi, 24)

"Renew a right Spirit within my bowels." (Ps. l, 12)

"How shall we love so that we may receive the Holy Ghost, whom we should have in order to be able to love?" (S. Aug.)

3. *Purity of soul*

But in vain will you beseech the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, if you do not purify your hearts from everything that would be an obstacle to the graces He wishes to bestow on you. The great obstacle is sin. Your soul cannot be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit while sin reigns in it.

"My spirit shall not remain in man for ever because he is flesh." (Gen. vi, 3)

"Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man shall violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." (1 Cor. iii, 16, 17)

"I have filled Him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding, and knowledge in all manner of work." (Exod. xxxi, 3)

"Can we find such another man, that is full of the Spirit of God?" (Gen. xli, 38)

"He [Paul] said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? But they said to him: we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost." (Acts xix, 2)

"The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, and will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding, and He shall not abide when iniquity cometh in." (Wis. i, 5)

"You always resist the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii, 51)

"An impure life expels the Spirit." (S. Chrys.)

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii, 9)

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Gal. v, 25)

"Extinguish not the Spirit." (1 Thess. v, 19)

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv, 30)

"Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." (Ps. l, 13)

"Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love," etc.

Divisions

I

Happiness of the soul that receives the Holy Ghost.

1. There is no better way of understanding the happiness of a soul that receives the Holy Ghost, and the fruits He produces in it, than by considering the wonderful effects His coming produced on the Apostles:

1°. He enlightened and instructed them. Before they received the Holy Spirit: "This word was hid from them." (Luke xviii, 34)

2°. He bestowed on them supernatural strength to uphold the truths they were to preach to the world: "They went rejoicing . . . that they were worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts v, 41). This Divine Spirit enlightened them with His lights by communicating to them the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel; He confirmed their will by the gifts of strength, of piety, and of the fear of God. (Short explanation of these gifts.)

3°. He sanctified them, not only by pouring habitual charity into their hearts: "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. v, 5); but also by correcting their defects and imperfections, which remain even in the state of grace. It is this Divine Spirit that inspires all acts of virtue.

2. *By what marks can we know whether we have received the Holy Ghost?*

It is characteristic of the Spirit of God,

1°. To banish the spirit of the world from our hearts;

2°. To give us strength to fight against this evil spirit;

3°. To unite the hearts of the faithful in the bonds of perfect charity, and

4°. To fill us with an ardent zeal in the service of God.

II

1. *Happiness of the faithful soul that has received the Holy Ghost.*

David in the 50th psalm calls the Holy Ghost a right Spirit, a holy and a strong Spirit. These names indicate the effects He produces in the soul that has the happiness to receive Him.

1°. He is a Spirit of rectitude, guiding the soul;

2°. A Spirit of holiness, purifying it;

3°. A Spirit of strength, animating and sustaining it.

2. *Misery of the sinful soul that resists the Holy Ghost.*

This is shown by the words of the Psalmist: "My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me." (Ps. xxxvii, 11)

1°. That Spirit that guided it, guides it no longer; it becomes blind;

2°. The soul, no longer possessing that Spirit of holiness, falls into sins of pure malice; it commits sin without fear and without remorse;

3°. The soul, having lost that Spirit of fortitude, falls into final impenitence, which is the last degree of the sins against the Holy Ghost, and the consummation of all sins: "Because he hath been rebellious against the Lord, he shall be cut off from among His people; for he hath contemned the word of the Lord, and made void His precepts; therefore shall he be destroyed and shall bear his iniquity." (Num. xv, 30, 31)

LXXI

HUMAN RESPECT

"Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." (Matth. xi, 6)

This is the mark by which the Savior of the world recognizes His true disciples. He declares that we must not hope to be of the number of His children unless we are firmly resolved to profess openly that we are such. But by so declaring, He excludes from His kingdom those cowardly Christians who blush to be called His followers, and who suffer themselves to be tyrannized over by human respect. Slaves of human respect, I will show you: I. How unworthy your conduct is; II. How sinful it is.

I. UNWORTHY CONDUCT

Human respect is unworthy of every man who knows God, but it is especially unworthy of a Christian raised by Baptism to the adoption of the Children of God. In truth human respect is, (1) shameful slavery, (2) contemptible cowardice.

1. *Shameful slavery*

What is more slavish than to be reduced, or rather to reduce oneself, to the necessity of regulating one's religion and one's whole conduct according to the whim of others and the foolish judgment of the world? There are circumstances in which slavery is tolerable, reasonable, nay sometimes even honorable; but to submit to it in a matter which in its very essence is free, as is the profession of our faith and the exercise of our religion, is an act which neither our conscience nor the dignity of our being can permit. It is a slavery so much the more shameful, that it is the effect of a meanness of spirit and a want of moral courage which we try, but in vain, to hide from ourselves. We allow ourselves to be troubled: by what? A word; and by whom? By thoughtless men, whose folly and impiety are often known to us.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel." (Rom. i, 16)

"When all went to the golden calves, which Jeroboam, king of Israel, had made, he [Tobias] alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord." (Tob. i, 5)

"He that walketh in the right way and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth by an infamous way." (Prov. xiv, 2)

"Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man, who shall wither away like grass? And thou hast forgotten the Lord, thy maker, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth." (Is. li, 12, 13)

"When they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God. . . . [Therefore] God delivered them up to a reprobate sense." (Rom. i, 21, 28)

"They worshipped what they reproved, they did what they censured, they adored what they condemned." (S. Aug.)

"Serving to the eye as pleasing men." (Coloss. iii, 22)

"If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed. . . . But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief. . . . But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." (1 Pet. iv, 14–16)

"All that this people speaketh is a conspiracy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." (Is. viii, 12, 13)

"It was not without cause that He wished His seal to be placed on our forehead, as on the position of modesty, lest the Christian should blush at the shame of Christ." (S. Aug.)

"For this reason the Lord placed His cross on the foreheads of those who believed in Him, where in a sense, is the seat of modesty, that Faith might not blush at His name, and might love the glory of God rather than that of men." (*Id.*)

"There is nothing so peculiar to slavery as a ceaseless fear." (S. Ambr.)

"What reason is there, I ask, for being ashamed before men and yet not dreading the angry countenance of God?" (S. Bern.)

"There is nothing more troublesome than the desire to please men." (Tert.)

2. *Contemptible cowardice*

I belong to God, I owe all to Him, and I betray Him. Unpardonable cowardice, struck by so many anathemas in the Gospel! Ah! let us remember the holy martyrs. Did they fear the presence of men? Let us imitate S. John the Baptist, who confessed Jesus Christ even in prison.

"He confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed: I am not the Christ." (John i, 20)

"He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His Majesty." (Luke ix, 26)

"If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it;

and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind . . . who didst take sweet meats together with me." (Ps. liv, 13–15)

"To whom have you likened Me, and made Me equal, and compared Me?" (Is. xlvi, 5)

"Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell." (Matth. x, 28)

"Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. i, 10)

"To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day." (1 Cor. iv, 3)

"Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good. . . . Be not afraid of their fear and be not troubled." (1 Pet. iii, 13, 14)

"They are of the world; therefore of the world they speak, and the world heareth them. We are of God." (1 John iv, 5, 6)

"What is thy business? of what country art thou? and whither goest thou? And he [Jonas] said to them: I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of Heaven." (Jonas i, 8, 9)

"You are afraid to offend a great man, and yet you are not afraid to offend God." (S. Aug.)

"What will you do when Christ shall say to you: You were ashamed of My humility, you shall not enter into My glory." (*Id.*)

"What, I ask, will that man do in the agony of punishment who, when mocked, was ashamed of Christ?" (S. Greg.)

"He thinks himself a Christian who is either ashamed or afraid to be a Christian. How can he be with Christ who is either ashamed or afraid to belong to Christ?" (S. Cypr.)

"I fear I should be laughed at or despised. Miserable man, do you wish not to be laughed at by your fellow slave, but to be hated by your Lord?" (S. Chrys.)

"Christ was not ashamed to be crucified for your sake, and you are ashamed to acknowledge publicly His indescribable sovereignty." (*Id.*)

"Let us, then, displease those to whom Christ is displeasing." (S. Paulin.)

"Who art thou? Know that I am already a Christian. I shall not believe it, nor shall I consider you a Christian unless I see you in the church of Christ." (Simplician)

II. HOW SINFUL HUMAN RESPECT IS

In the order of salvation there is nothing more pernicious, nothing more to be condemned, nothing more opposed to the law of God, noth-

ing more deserving of the divine vengeance, than human respect: (1) Because human respect destroys in the heart of man the foundation of all religion, which is the love of God; (2) because it makes man fall into the most criminal apostasy; (3) because it checks in him the effects of the most powerful graces, and thus becomes the most fatal obstacle to the conversion of the worlding.

1. *Human respect destroys the foundation of all religion in the heart of man*

It destroys the divine love in the heart, and causes the creature to be preferred to the Creator. . . . For what is human respect, or rather why do we call it by that name, if not, as S. Thomas says, because in most cases it makes us respect the creature more than the Creator? This is the reproach which Tertullian made to the pagans:

"You fear Caesar rather than Jupiter; and you would more readily swear falsely by all the gods than by the genius of Caesar alone."

"Be not ashamed when you hear of the opprobrium of Christ. Why do you show signs of fear on your forehead, which you have armed with the sign of the Cross? A Christian must be without human respect when he goes among men to whom Christ is displeasing; when he is mocked, when he is called a worshipper of the Crucified, an adorer of the dead Malefactor, a venerator of the Slain: if you blush at these things, you are dead." (S. Aug.)

"As to blush at evil is praiseworthy, so to blush at what is good is reprehensible; to be ashamed of evil is a mark of wisdom, to be ashamed of what is good is a sign of folly." (S. Greg.)

"There is nothing more to be dreaded than that we should fear man more than God." (*Id.*)

2. *It makes a man fall into the most criminal apostasies*

The evil goes still farther, because human respect causes man to fall into an apostasy, which is no longer interior and secret, but, as is daily seen to the shame of the Christian name, is only too public and well known. Remember the irreverences which the fear of being considered devout Christians has made you commit so often before the altar itself, —such as assisting at Holy Mass without respect, as if you did not believe in it. Is there not there at least apostasy in act?

"In all these things there is a certain denial of the faith." (S. Cypr.)

"He was not overthrown by the violence of persecution, but he debased himself by his voluntary fall." (*Id.*)

"He that feareth man shall quickly fall." (Prov. xxix, 25)

"It is not enough to have Christ in the heart, and to be unwilling to confess Him when mockery is feared." (S. Aug.)

"A traitor is not only one who denies the truth, but also one who does not profess it." (S. Chrys.)

3. *How does this happen?*

This happens chiefly because human respect destroys the effects of the most powerful graces of God and becomes the most fatal obstacle to the conversion of the worldly-minded. Such a man feels within him an inclination to lead a more regular and Christian life, but he has not the courage to follow it out. He forms desires and plans of conversion. He sees the necessity of doing penance. He hears a sermon and is fully convinced. These are so many graces, but a false fear of the world destroys their influence. Is not this the most common obstacle to conversions? Do we not see people yield to this temptation even at death? I understand now the truth of the words of Tertullian: "I am saved if I am not ashamed of my God." Because if I do not blush at the name of God, I shall not be ashamed to perform my duties; and if I fulfil my duties in spite of what the world may say, I am saved:

"God hath scattered the bones of them that please men; they have been confounded because God hath despised them." (Ps. lii, 6)

"The fearful and unbelieving . . . shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone." (Apoc. xxi, 8)

"They have despised Me." (Is. i, 2) . . . "And pray to a God that cannot save." (*Ibid.*, xlv, 20)

"We fools esteemed their lives madness. . . . Behold how they are numbered among the children of God." (Wis. v, 4, 5)

"He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh at them; and the Lord shall deride them." (Ps. ii, 4)

"Fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies." (Is. li, 7)

"Thou art My servant. . . . Fear not, for I am with thee." (Is. xli, 9, 10)

"I set my face as a most hard rock, and I know that I shall not be confounded." (Is. l, 7)

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen." (Acts. iv, 20)

"With the heart, we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x, 10)

Divisions

I

"Woe to the world because of scandals. Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!" (Matth. xviii, 7)

Scandal of human respect: it is the scandal caused by those who by their conversation and conduct assist in maintaining human respect in the world.

1. *Nature of this scandal.*

It is so much the more sinful because it defies God more immediately and tends more directly to the destruction of His worship . . . "The sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord, because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord." (1 Kings ii, 17)

2. *Danger of this scandal.*

It is so much the more pernicious because it is spread so easily and infects souls more surely.

3. *Obligations that spring from it for all those who have authority in the world.*

They are the more clearly and strictly commanded to prevent and avoid it, because coming from them it is more contagious and deadly.

4. *This example which they give will be the most efficacious remedy against the scandal of human respect.* What an impression is made by the example of the great!

II

1. Sin of human respect.
2. Folly of human respect.
3. Injustice of human respect.

LXXII

NECESSITY OF PENANCE

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3)

The Son of God came into this world to save mankind; He will come again to judge men and to reward or punish them, according to the use they will have made of the graces He has merited for them. But it is by penance that you participate in the merits of the Saviour, and secure yourselves from the thunderbolts of His justice. Penance is necessary for every one in whatever state he may be, whether in a state of grace or in that of sin. I. It is necessary for sinners, to enable them to rise out of sin; II. It is necessary for the just, to preserve them from sin.

I. PENANCE IS NECESSARY FOR SINNERS, TO ENABLE THEM TO RISE OUT OF SIN

If man had not sinned, it would not be necessary for him to do penance. But penance has become indispensably necessary for him, because it alone can repair the disorder and the consequences of sin. Penance alone can appease the anger of God, and make atonement for the injury which sin has inflicted on Him. Penance alone can restore man to the friendship of God and cure the deep wound made by sin on his soul. Penance therefore is necessary for the sinner, (1) as an act of justice, and (2) as a remedy; justice with regard to God; a remedy for the sinner.

1. *As an Act of Justice*

As God is our first beginning and our last end, it cannot be denied that we should live for Him alone; every act of ours should be a homage rendered to the sovereignty of His Being; and we should acknowledge the absolute dependence which He requires of us, by a most perfect submission to His commands. But what does the man who offends God do? He renders himself guilty of inflicting an injury on God,—an act of the most criminal injustice. But will not God, who commands us to repair the injury we do to others, oblige the sinner to restore

the glory and honor of which sin has robbed Him? Will He not demand that sin be punished either by the rigors of a voluntary penance, or by the chastisements of divine justice? Is it not better to punish ourselves in this life for the sins we have committed, than to force Almighty God to punish us for them in the life to come?

"Who knoweth the power of Thy anger? and for Thy fear can number Thy wrath?" (Ps. lxxxix, 11)

"If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men." (Eccli. ii, 22)

"I attended and hearkened: there is none that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done?" (Jer. viii, 6)

"There is no change with them, and they have not feared God: He hath stretched forth His hand to repay." (Ps. liv, 20, 21)

And yet what is a penance that lasts but for a very short time, compared with everlasting pain?

"Gird yourselves with hair-cloth, lament and howl; for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned away from us." (Jer. iv, 8)

"If that nation against which I have spoken, shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I have thought to do them." (Jer. xviii, 8)

"Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities." (Ezech. xviii, 30)

"He [God] declareth unto men, that all should everywhere do penance." (Acts xvii, 30)

"To the gentiles did I preach, that they should do penance, and turn to God doing works worthy of penance." (Acts xxvi, 20)

"Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and do penance." (Apoc. ii, 5)

"A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses: how much more, do you think, he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. x, 28, 29)

"Penance is necessary, just as healing remedies are necessary for the wounded." (S. Ambr.)

"The Lord does not suffer sin to escape unpunished; for either repentant man punishes himself for it; or God punishes it by avenging it on man." (S. Greg.)

"We repent in words, but not in deeds." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"Penance takes its name from pain, because the soul is afflicted and the flesh mortified." (S. Aug.)

"The sin which is not wiped out by penance, very quickly draws the sinner into another sin by its weight." (S. Greg.)

"Behold the greater crimes, to have sinned and not to make atonement, to have committed a crime, and not to weep." (S. Cypr.)

2. *The Remedy*

Would you not be very blind and cruel towards yourselves if you did not profit by so easy a means offered to you by God in penance, of appeasing His justice, and regaining His friendship, and curing the deadly wound made in your soul by sin? This wound must be very deep, since the moment the soul sins it dies, that is to say, it loses the life of grace, the friendship of God, and the right which it had to the divine inheritance.

"The soul that sinneth, the same shall die." (Ezech. xviii, 20)

Penance restores life to the soul, reconciles it to God; it alone can open Heaven, which was closed against the soul by sin.

As much as Baptism is necessary to cleanse the soul from original sin: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii, 5); so much is penance necessary to wipe away actual sin: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3)

Penance is necessary *necessitate medii* for him who has sinned.

"You must do penance or burn." (S. Aug.)

But if you do penance, you are sure to find pardon at the throne of God's mercy: "Turn ye to Me and I will turn to you, saith the Lord." (Zach. i, 3)

"He [Jonas] cried and said: Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed. And the men of Ninive believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth from the greatest to the least. . . . And he [the King] rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed in sack-cloth, and sat in ashes. . . . And God saw their works, that they were turned from their evil way; and God had mercy with regard to the evil which He had said that He would do to them, and He did it not." (Jonas iii, 4–10)

"The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas." (Matth. xii, 41)

The prodigal son did penance and was re-established in his former state:

"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee. . . . And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him." (Luke xv, 21, 22)

"Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance." (Wis. xi, 24)

"After Thou didst convert me, I did penance. . . . I am confounded and ashamed, because I have borne the reproach of my youth." (Jer. xxxi, 19)

"If the wicked do penance for all the sins which he hath committed, and keep all My commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done." (Ezech. xviii, 21, 22)

"If I shall say to the wicked: Thou shalt surely die: and he do penance for his sin, . . . and walk in the commandments of life, and do no unjust thing: he shall surely live, and shall not die." (Ezech. xxxiii, 14, 15)

"If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes." (Matth. xi. 21)

"As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification." (Rom. vi, 19)

"There shall be joy in Heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." (Luke xv, 7)

"In penance each one should practise greater severity, so that being judged by himself, he may not be judged by God." (S. Aug.)

"I have more easily found those who have preserved their innocence than those who have done suitable penance." (S. Ambr.)

"He who is truly penitent, does not dread the work of penance." (S. Greg.)

"Penance is, as it were, a second plank to the wretched after shipwreck." (S. Jerome)

"The less you will have spared yourself, the more God will spare you." (Tert.)

"So great is the healing virtue of penance that God seems to change His sentence." (S. Ambr.)

"Let him who has not preserved sanctity of soul endure the bitter sorrow of repentance." (S. Pet. Chrys.)

II. THE JUST ALSO HAVE NEED OF PENANCE TO PRESERVE THEM FROM SIN

1. However just a man may be, he cannot be certain that he has always preserved his innocence, or that he has recovered it by penance if he has once lost it by sin.

"Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred; but

all things are kept uncertain for the time to come." (Eccli. ix, 1, 2)

"Be not without fear about sin forgiven." (Eccli. v, 5)

"My spirit is in anguish within me; my heart within me is troubled." (Ps. cxlii, 4)

"I will think for my sin." (Ps. xxxvii, 19)

Thus, no matter what precautions a man may have taken to recover the grace of God after having once lost it by sin, he will always be uncertain whether he has had all the dispositions necessary for obtaining pardon. But in this uncertainty should we not always have recourse to penance in order to make our salvation secure?

"I am filled with a great fear because of my hidden sins, which are clear to Thy eyes, but not to mine. Thou hast known how I have grieved and wept for these; I am filled with fear because of my hidden sins." (S. Aug.)

"O penance, mother of mercy and mistress of virtues! great are thy works, by which thou dost pardon the guilty, restore the sinner to grace, raise up the fallen, and give fresh hope to the despairing." (S. Chrys.)

"The whole life of a Christian ought to be a life of penance." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 9)

2. But even though the just man were assured of possessing the friendship of God, how many light faults escape his notice, for which he must make atonement! How many occasions of sin, to which he exposes himself, and against which he should have been on his guard! But penance is at the same time the remedy for sin and the preservative against it. It takes the place of the temporal punishment due to sins that have been forgiven, and banishes the temptation that might cause us to fall again. There is no one, says St. Augustine, whose conduct is so well regulated as that his virtue may not be stained by some light faults.

"A just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again." (Prov. xxiv, 16)

Although those venial sins do not deprive us of the friendship of God, yet they are faults committed against His Divine Majesty. We must atone for them by a voluntary penance in this life, or suffer the rigors of divine justice in the fires of Purgatory in the next. Moreover, although the mercy of God may have remitted the guilt of mortal sin and the eternal punishment due to it, yet His justice requires that the sinner should suffer temporal punishment, and so make some satisfaction. This is why a penance is imposed on the sinner in confession. But what is this penance compared with what he deserves? We must, then, perform voluntary penances here, if we wish to escape the chastisements of God hereafter.

However holy a man may be, he must do penance in order to pay off his debts; he must pray, fast, and practise mortification. Consider the case of David; he was assured of forgiveness, and yet he did not cease to weep:

"Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears." (Ps. vi, 7)

"I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me." (Ps. xxxvii, 18)

"I made haircloth my garment." (Ps. lxviii, 12)

Of Mary Magdalen Christ said: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." (Luke vii, 47)

And yet, even after hearing these words, her life was one of the most rigorous penance.

S. Paul, who was not conscious of any sin ("I am not conscious to myself, yet am I not thereby justified"; 1 Cor. iv, 4), yet says:

"I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away." (1 Cor. ix, 27)

"I do penance in dust and ashes." (Job xlii, 6)

"Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning." (Joel ii, 12)

"Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matth. iii, 2)." Bring forth fruits worthy of penance." (Luke iii, 8)

Divisions

I

1. *Severity of penance, necessary and consoling.*

1°. A severe penance is necessary, because man, in judging and imposing penance on himself, fulfils the office of the Great Judge: he should, therefore, judge himself with rigor.

2°. In this matter man becomes the judge, not of another, but of himself: he must, therefore, be severe in his judgment.

3°. From the judgment which man passes on himself there is an appeal to a higher judgment, that of God: he ought, therefore, to proceed with an inflexible justice.

2. Severity of penance, consoling.

1°. It brings peace to our conscience;

2°. It fills us with the joy of the Holy Ghost.

II

We are indispensably obliged to do penance,

1. Because the entire punishment due to sin is not usually remitted by the Sacrament of Penance;

2. Because sin must be atoned for in this life or in the next.

III

Advantages of penance:

1. It blots out our sins;
2. It revives our merits;
3. It restores us to the friendship of God;
4. It delivers us from the punishment which our sins deserve;
5. It procures for us the peace and happiness of a good conscience.

LXXIII

THE QUALITIES OF PENANCE

"Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning." (Joel ii, 12)

After a man has committed sin, penance is the only resource that remains to him for securing his salvation.

"Penance is necessary for all men who, having committed any mortal sin, would return to the state of grace, even for those who seek to be cleansed in the Sacrament of Baptism." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 1)

Therefore, practise penance joyfully, and secure for yourselves the friendship of God, by sincere sorrow of heart and the holy austerities of a mortified life. Remember that the least delay or a slothful negligence may cause your ruin. I. Let your penance be prompt; II. Let your penance be sincere.

I. PENANCE SHOULD BE PROMPT

It is rare to find sinners so hardened in crime that they never wish to turn away from it. They intend to do penance some day, and to give themselves to God, . . . but they continually defer doing so.

"Tomorrow! Tomorrow! How long shall I cry out tomorrow? Why not now, why not at this moment break the bonds that bind me to evil?" (S. Aug.)

And yet (1) how injurious is this delay to God, and (2) how baneful to the sinner.

1. To understand the injury you do to God in deferring your repentance, consider His goodness in predisposing the sinner, and in seeking for him in his evil ways.

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth. xi, 28)

"Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you." (Zach. i, 3)

"Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities." (Ezech. xviii, 30)

"Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee." (Jer. iii, 1)

"They have laid hold on lying, and have refused to return." (Jer. viii, 5)

And the sinner does not yield to those loving invitations of God! What base ingratitude!

2. But how baneful that ingratitude, that resistance to the voice of God, becomes to the sinner!

"Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath." (Rom. ii, 5)

"I called and you refused; I stretched out My hand, and there was no one that regarded. You have despised all My counsel, and have neglected My reprehensions. I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that shall come upon you which you feared." (Prov. i, 24–26)

"I go, and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sins." (John viii, 21)

"Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of His vengeance He will destroy thee." (Eccli. v, 8, 9)

"Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He should not hear." (Is. lix, 2)

By doing penance promptly, then, you will be working for your own interests as well as for the glory of God. In deferring it you expose yourselves to great loss and to very grave danger. The little good which you do in a state of mortal sin is entirely without merit in the sight of God; your prayers, your fasts, your alms are worthless.

"He that washeth himself from touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his washing avail? So a man that fasteth for his sins, and doth the same again, what doth his humbling himself profit him? Who will hear His prayer?" (Eccli. xxxiv. 30, 31)

You defer your repentance; are you then the sovereign disposer of your life? May not death surprise you? And even if you should have time to do penance, will God give you the grace to do it, after having so long resisted His holy will? But though you should have the time and the grace to do penance, you will not do it, because of the great difficulty you will experience,—a difficulty that will arise from the sinful habits you will have contracted.

"Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose then shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii, 20)

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22)

"The night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4)

"Let mercy forget him, . . . let him be broken in pieces as an unfruitful tree. . . . God hath given him place for penance, and he abuseth it unto pride." (Job xxiv, 20, 23)

"A hard heart shall fare evil at the last; and he that loveth the danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father." (Matth. vii, 21)

"I gave her a time that she might do penance, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, . . . they shall be in very great tribulation except they do penance from their deeds. . . . And I will give to every one of you according to your works." (Apoc. ii, 21–23)

"Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you [who are dying], having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Apoc. xii, 12)

"Whilst we have time, let us work good." (Gal. vi, 10)

"The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" (Eccli. xxv, 5)

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6)

"The only answer I used to give you was the hesitating and drowsy one, soon: 'Soon; give me a little more time'; but that soon had no limit, and that little time was turning out to be long." (S. Aug.)

"A happy death follows a good life. Sinners who repent while in health and persevere unto the end, die happily. But with regard to those who repent in their last illness, I say nothing, as I cannot say whether they die in a state of grace or not. Were I sure, I would tell them so and give them security. When I am not sure, I give penance, but not security. Do you wish, then, not to have doubt about your salvation, to escape uncertainty? If so, do penance while you are in health." (S. Aug.)

"The penance which is done by a sick man is sickly; that done by a dying man will, I fear, be dead itself." (S. Aug.)

"Penance turns aside the indignation of God." (Tert.)

II. PENANCE SHOULD BE SINCERE AND REAL

Justice requires that there should be some equality between the satisfaction that is offered and the rights that have been violated. The penance, therefore, should be in some way proportionate to the injury which sin inflicts on God; it should re-establish the order disturbed by sin; it should make a new man of the sinner by reforming his heart and his life; and in order to do this, (1) it must spring from the heart: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new

man" (Eph. iv, 23); and (2) it must be manifested in works: "As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice." (Rom. vi, 19)

1. *It must spring from the heart*

The first office of penance is to reform the heart. This is the first satisfaction which the justice of God demands from the sinner:

"Be converted to me with all your heart, . . . and rend your hearts and not your garments." (Joel ii, 12, 13)

"If thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would indeed have given it; [but] with burnt offerings Thou wilt not be delighted. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a humble and contrite heart, O Lord, Thou wilt not despise.'" (Ps. l, 18, 19)

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit. . . . Return ye and live." (Ezech. xviii, 31, 32)

"When thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him: yet so if thou shalt seek Him with all thy heart, and all the affection of thy soul." (Deut. iv, 29)

The sinner "hath not returned to Me with her whole heart, but with falsehood." (Jerem. iii, 10)

"Do not seek outside your own heart for a sacrifice; you have within you a sacrifice which you may offer up: a contrite heart." (S. Aug.)

But why does God demand the sacrifice of the heart in preference to any other? Because the whole malice of sin consists in the turning away of the heart from God. What is sin?

"Sin is a turning away of the heart from God and turning it to the creature." (S. Thos.)

If man's actions are sins, it is the heart which communicates to them their malice.

"From the heart go forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man." (Matth. xv, 19, 20)

To perform sincere penance, it is necessary first of all to change the heart, to hate what is loved, and to love what is hated.

"Create a clean heart in me, O God." (Ps. l, 12)

"The sinner does not do penance unless he hates sin and loves God." (S. Aug.)

But this hatred of sin is not simply a dislike of its deformity. The sinner must hate the matter, the cause, the occasion of sin; he must renounce that object, quit that society, restore unjustly acquired goods, repair the injury done.

"If I have wronged any man of anything, I restore to him fourfold." (Luke xix, 8)

"If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, Baalim and Astaroth; and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." (1 Kings vii, 3)

"The Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings xvi, 7)

"The searcher of hearts and reins is God." (Ps. vii, 10)

2. It must be manifested in works

To be content with a pretended renewal of the mind and heart, without changing one's manners and conduct, is to stop half-way; it is even to cause doubts as to the change of heart, which, if real and sincere, should produce fruits.

"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance." (Luke iii, 8)

"Decline from evil and do good." (Ps. xxxvi, 27)

"Wash yourselves: be clean. Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed. Judge for the fatherless. Defend the widow." (Is. i, 16, 17)

"Penance must produce fruit in order to obtain life." (S. Aug.)

It is not enough, then, to abandon the ways of sin; we must walk in the paths of justice; we must fulfil our duties towards God by giving to Him the adoration, love, and respect that are due to Him; towards our neighbor: duties of charity and justice;—towards ourselves: duties of sobriety, chastity, and penance.

"Change the heart and the works will be changed." (S. Aug.)

"Thy speech doth discover thee." (Matth. xxvi, 73)

"By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matth. vii, 16)

"They loved Him with their mouth; and with their mouth and with their tongues they lied unto Him. But their heart was not right with Him." (Ps. lxxvii, 36, 37)

In order to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, we must atone for sin by exterior works that mortify the body as well as the soul, since the body has been the accomplice of the soul in doing evil.

"You have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity." (Rom. vi, 19)

This is why severe penances were imposed by the early Church for certain sins. Would a sinner, in fact, be punished sufficiently by simply detesting the sins of his past life, by ceasing to do evil? If it were so, reconciliation with God would not be as difficult as the Holy Scriptures tell us it is.

"The penance lasts longer than the sin, lest the sin might be considered of small account, if, when it ended, the penance also ended." (S. Aug.)

"If a man could quickly return to his former health, it would be pastime for him to fall into death by sinning." (S. Aug.)

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 7, 8)

"Hear ye [therefore], ye scornful men, . . . who have said: We have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come upon us; for we have placed our hope in lies, and by falsehood we are protected. Therefore thus saith the Lord: . . . Hail shall overturn the hope of falsehood, and waters shall overflow its protection. And your league with death shall be abolished, and your covenant with hell shall not stand." (Is. xxviii, 14–18)

"As much as she hath lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii, 7)

"They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v, 24)

"I call the man repentant who weeps day and night, who casts away his bad habits, who goes not after his concupiscences, and deprives himself of his sinful pleasures." (S. Aug.)

"We promise penance by words, but we do nothing." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more; but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee." (Eccli. xxi, 1)

"Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it." (Matth. vii, 13, 14)

"Let him who is wise, and who seriously strives to save his soul, listen. This is the word of eternal wisdom:—*Strive to enter.*" (S. Aug.)

Divisions

I

1. Penance should be *severe* and *rigorous,* in order that it may satisfy the divine justice. "Penance fulfils the office of the anger of God." (Tert.)
2. It should be *constant* and *lasting.*
3. It should be *proportioned to the number and the malice of the sins.*

The efficacy of penance arises from the *fruits* which it produces; and these fruits are reduced to three:

1. To remove the cause of sin;
2. To repair the effects of sin;
3. To subject the sinner to the remedies against sin.

II

To do penance is to *change the mind, the heart, the life.*

1. To change the mind is to despise in a spirit of penance all that one esteemed in the state of sin, and to esteem what one despised.

2. To change the heart is to hate what was loved and to love what was hated.

3. To change the life is to avoid the works that were done in sin, and to do what one then avoided doing.

LXXIV

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

"Let us search our ways, and seek, and return to the Lord." (Lament. iii, 40)

The Sacrament of Penance was instituted for the remission of sins committed after Baptism. Jesus Christ gave to the Apostles and their successors in the episcopal and sacerdotal ministry, the power to forgive and to retain sins.

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx, 23)

But how could priests exercise the power of forgiving sins if the people were not obliged to declare those sins? "Therefore the keys of the Church have been given in vain." (S. Aug.) In order that a penitent may make a true declaration of his sins, he must know himself, he must examine himself, he must make an exact and careful search for the sins he has committed. Consider: I. What should form the matter of the examination; II. What rule should be followed in making it.

I. MATTER OF THE EXAMINATION

As confession is based upon the examination of conscience, it follows that this examination should include all the sins of which the penitent is bound to accuse himself in confession. But in order to render the confession entire, the penitent must accuse himself of all mortal sins, of their number, and of the circumstances which aggravate their guilt. He must accuse himself of all the sins he has committed against the commandments of God and of the Church, of all sinful thoughts, desires, and words, of all deeds and omissions of which he has been guilty towards God, towards his neighbor, and towards himself. He must also make known the causes and the effects of his sins, the sinful occasions in which he has been, the habits he has contracted, the sins of his state and condition in life. He must tell not only the sins he himself has committed, but also the sins he has made others commit, or which he has not prevented when he could have done so; all the scandal he has given, all the injury he has caused his neighbor in goods or repu-

tation. He must further declare the circumstances of time, place, quantity, object, quality of person, by reason of which a sin becomes notably graver or changes its species. But how can he declare all this if he does not know it? And how can he know it without examining his conscience?

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

"I will declare my iniquity, and I will think for my sin." (Ps. xxxvii, 19)

"She hath looked well to the paths of her house." (Prov. xxxi, 27)

"I will seek Thy commandments with all my heart. . . . Depart from me, ye malignant, and I will search the commandments of my God." (Ps. cxviii, 69, 115)

"I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my injustice I have not concealed." (Ps. xxxi, 5)

"Set thee up a watch-tower, make to thee bitterness: direct thy heart into the right way." (Jer. xxxi, 21)

"The sinner should examine himself diligently, and explore all the folds and hiding-places of his conscience." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 5)

"Though you should know all mysteries; though you should know the utmost limits of the earth, the highest heavens, and the depths of the sea,—if you do not know yourself, you will be like to a man who builds a house without a foundation, erecting a ruin, not a building. He is not wise who does not know himself. Let your examination begin with yourself, and not that only, but let it be also ended in yourself; wheresoever it may wander, you will recall it to yourself with profit to your soul." (S. Bern.)

"Make a daily examination of your life; consider diligently how much you are advancing or falling back, what you are in your manners and disposition." (S. Bern.)

"Diligently examine thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by true contrition and humble confession; so as not to have or know of any thing to give thee remorse and hinder thy free access." (*Imit.*, Bk. IV, c. 7)

II. WHAT RULE SHOULD BE FOLLOWED IN MAKING THE EXAMINATION, AND HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD BE GIVEN TO IT

1. The infallible rule is the examination which God Himself will make of the sins of men. And how strict this examination will be!

"It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and will visit upon the men that are settled upon their lees,

that say in their hearts: The Lord will not do good, nor will he do evil." (Sophon. i, 12)

"The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the thoughts of minds." (1 Paral. xxviii, 9)

"Watch . . . lest God discover thy secrets, and cast thee down in the midst of the congregation." (Eccli. i, 38, 39)

"I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to the kingdoms." (Nahum iii, 5)

"Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known." (Matth. x, 26)

"If we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange god; shall not God search those things? For He knoweth the secrets of hearts." (Ps. xliii, 21, 22)

"Give an account of thy stewardship." (Luke xvi, 2)

"What shall I, a poor wretch, then say when the Judge comes to make a strict examination of all things?" (*Offic. Defunct.*)

"What woman, . . . if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it?" (Luke xv, 8)

That which you have lost is much more precious than this groat; you have lost divine grace, and you can recover it only by confession preceded by a diligent examination.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi, 31)

"Search ye diligently in the book of the Lord, and read; not one of them was wanting." (Is. xxxiv, 16)

"After each one has carefully examined his conscience, and explored all its folds and corners, let him confess those sins by which he remembers that he has mortally offended his Lord and God." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 5)

"If, after a diligent examination of conscience, you fail to recall a mortal sin which has escaped your memory, your confession is good and that sin is pardoned with the rest; but you are bound to confess it afterwards and to confess it explicitly. You are not obliged to make all your past confessions over again; but you might say that you confessed other sins in the confession in which the sin you now explicitly confess, was forgotten." (S. Thos.)

2. *How much time should be given to the examination?* No general rule can be laid down; so much depends on the number of sins each one has committed, and the time that has elapsed since his last confession.

No one doubts that a sinner who offends God frequently, and rarely goes to confession, should employ more time in examining his conscience, than one who seldom offends God and often confesses. And

yet it is the habitual sinners, who seldom go to confession, that give least time to this examination. Ah! this is not how they act in temporal affairs in which they are interested.

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." (Luke xvi, 8)

"Son of Man, dig in the wall. . . . Go in, and see the wicked abominations . . . and behold every form of creeping things, and of living creatures, the abomination." (Ezech. viii, 8–10)

"Who can understand [his] sins?" (Ps. xviii, 13)

"They do not consider in their mind, nor know, nor have the thought." (Is. xliv, 19)

"He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. xxxv, 4)

"Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?" (Matth. vii, 3)

"They discuss the affairs of others, but do not attend to their own." (S. Chrys.)

"Why does he not see? His eyes are made heavy by many sins." (S. Aug.)

In order to make this examination with care, withdraw into some quiet place, and there in silence and recollection, "as a sparrow all alone on the house top" (Ps. ci, 8), say to God with all the fervor of which you are capable:

"Lord, let me know myself, let me know Thee." (S. Aug.)

"How many are my iniquities and sins? make me know my crimes and offences." (Job xiii, 23)

"My God, enlighten my darkness." (Ps. xvii, 29)

"Give me understanding, and I will search Thy law." (Ps. cxviii, 34)

"Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night." (Jer. ix, 1)

"I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice." (Ps. cxviii, 106)

"This do, and thou shalt live." (Luke x, 28)

Divisions

I

1. There is nothing more useful than to make an *examination of conscience every evening,* in order to discover our weakness and to break off bad habits.

2. *Neglect of this examination* may have fatal consequences, since in omitting it we risk our eternal salvation.

3. We must not be content with a *superficial examination;* we must

enter seriously into ourselves, and carefully examine all our thoughts, words, and actions of the day.

II

The particular examination.

1. The particular examination differs from the general, in as much as it concerns one sin only, or one fault which we wish to correct.

2. In the particular examination we must direct our efforts to conquering our predominant vice, or that which may have the saddest consequences for us.

3. The way to make this examination is to form, at morning prayer, the resolution to avoid the fault which we have undertaken to combat, to employ the means necessary for that purpose, and to compare one day with another so as to see whether we are making progress or not.

LXXV

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

CONTRITION

"A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l, 19)

God pardons our sins the moment we detest them with all our heart, as He wishes. I will speak to you of this sorrow that wipes away sin. It is a subject so much the more important because many confessions are null and sacrilegious owing to the absence of true sorrow. Some are altogether wanting in contrition; in others the contrition does not possess the conditions which God requires before He pardons the sinner. Let us see then: I. The necessity of contrition; II. The qualities of contrition.

I. NECESSITY OF CONTRITION

"Contrition, which holds the first place among the acts of the penitent, is a grief of heart and hatred of the sins committed, together with a resolution not to commit sin again." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 4)

Thus, contrition should embrace both the past and the future.

"To repent is to weep for the offences committed, and in weeping to be determined not to commit them again." (S. Greg.)

"These two things, namely, sorrow for past sins, and a purpose and caution to avoid in future the commission of sins, have been always necessary to obtain the forgiveness of sin." (Council of Trent, as above)

God has never forgiven and never will forgive actual sin except on condition that the sinner repent. This is a truth of which (1) the Holy Scriptures, and (2) reason furnish undeniable proofs.

1. *Necessity of Contrition Proved from Scripture*

What does God first demand from sinners who wish to recover His grace?

"Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezech. xviii, 31)

"Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord, your God." (Joel ii, 13)

"Return to Me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord." (Malach. iii, 7)

"Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you." (Zach. i, 3)

David obtained pardon of his sin only through the sincere sorrow which he felt for it.

"My bones are troubled, and my soul is troubled exceedingly. . . . I have labored in my groanings; every night I wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears." (Ps. vi, 3, 4, 7)

"A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a humble and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l, 19)

"My sorrow is continually before me." (Ps. xxxvii, 18)

"He sinned one night, he weeps every night." (S. Ephrem)

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

"My sorrow is above sorrow, my heart mourneth within me." (Jer. viii, 18)

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii, 3)

But penance consists principally in sorrow for sin, in a change of heart; without this sorrow, without this change, the other works of penance are of little use.

"These are ghosts and shadows of penance." (S. Chrys.)

Contrition is more necessary to salvation than confession, since sorrow, accompanied by a desire to confess, can in certain cases supply the place of actual confession, whereas nothing can supply the place of sorrow.

"You must hate your work in yourself, otherwise God will not save His work in you." (S. Aug.)

"What will it profit a man to confess his sins, if he is not heartily sorry for them?" (S. Greg.)

2. Reason proves the necessity of contrition

God can pardon man's sin only by changing His disposition towards the sinner, that is to say, by feeling love for him instead of the hatred which He had conceived against him. But God changes His disposition towards the sinner only when the sinner turns to Him with his whole heart. What does man do when he commits sin? He turns away from and leaves God in order to attach himself to a creature. This preferring of a creature to God is the work of the heart; it is, therefore, necessary that the heart should change again and return to God.

"No one does penance unless he loves God and hates sin." (S. Aug.)

"Any one can say that he does not sin; but no ignorance will dare to say if he has sinned, that he need not repent." (*Id.*)

"Children excepted, no one begins to be what he was not, unless he repents having been what he was." (*Id.*)

The sinner, then, can hope for pardon only when his heart is broken, changed by a contrition which causes him to hate sin and to return to God.

But what is this contrition which is necessary for justification? It is an act of the will which withdraws from, detests, and hates sin, and repents of having committed it; and which makes the sinner determined never to sin again.

It is not enough, therefore, to be determined never again to sin; the sinner must be sincerely sorry.

"Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii, 19)

II. QUALITIES OF A GOOD CONTRITION

Contrition, to be pleasing to God and beneficial to the sinner, should be, (1) supernatural in its source and motives; (2) universal in its object; and (3) efficacious and firm in its resolution.

1. *It should be supernatural in its source and motives*

That is to say, 1°. it should be produced by a movement of grace, and 2°. founded on considerations of faith.

1°. *Contrition is a disposition of mind proximately disposing the sinner to justification.* But faith teaches that everything which proximately disposes us to justification should be supernatural, that is, it should come from the Holy Ghost; because justification itself is a supernatural gift, which is not due to man, and which cannot be attributed to his own powers. Contrition is a movement of the Holy Spirit, a gift of God. We must then ask for it in fervent prayer.

"Convert us, O Lord, to Thee, and we shall be converted." (Lament. v, 21)

"Create a clean heart in me, O Lord." (Ps. l, 12)

"After Thou didst convert me, I did penance." (Jer. xxxi, 19)

"They shall remember Me, because I have broken their heart, that was faithless and revolted from me." (Ezech. vi, 9)

God is always ready to help us.

"Is it My will that a sinner should die, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live?" (Ezech. xviii, 23)

But we must ask this help from Him in prayer. We must act in or-

der to correspond with grace, and be influenced by the motives of sorrow which it proposes to us.

2°. *What are the supernatural motives for contrition?*

They are those considerations which Faith puts before us in order to make us hate sin, by inducing us to consider what it is in reference to God and to our salvation.

"And the holy Synod teaches that if it sometimes happens that this contrition is perfect in charity, it reconciles us with God, before the Sacrament is actually received." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 4)

How far removed from this supernatural grief is that sorrow which is produced by human motives only.

"This wicked man [Antiochus] prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy." (2 Mach. ix, 13)

"The sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. vii, 10)

The swindler who repents because he fears punishment is still a swindler.

"The raging wolf comes, the frightened wolf goes away; but whether raging or frightened, he is still a wolf." (S. Aug.)

"Many weep: I also weep, and I weep for those who weep in vain." (*Id.*)

2. It should be universal in its object

If your sorrow springs from a supernatural motive, it will be universal in its object; that is to say, you will detest all your sins without exception. It would be useless to offer to God a heart that would be sorry for certain sins only, while remaining attached to objects that would render it guilty before His Sovereign Majesty.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (Jas. ii, 10)

"Great as the sea is thy sorrow." (Lament. ii, 13)

"I have hated every way of iniquity." (Ps. cxviii, 104)

3. *It should be efficacious and firm in its purpose of amendment*

If contrition includes the hatred of sin and the love of God, can the sinner hate sin without being resolved to avoid it? Can we love God as He should be loved, without being disposed to observe His commandments?

But this good purpose should be accompanied by a firm resolution to resist temptation and to avoid the occasions of sin.

"I have sworn and am determined the keep the judgments of Thy justice." (Ps. cxviii, 106)

"If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear." (Ps. xxvi, 3)

"Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" (Rom. viii, 35)

"Love is strong as death." (Cant. viii, 6)

"Nothing is difficult to him who loves." (S. Aug.)

"By their fruits you shall know them." (Matth. vii, 16)

"Go, and now sin no more." (John viii, 11)

"Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." (John v, 14)

"He who does penance ought not only to wipe out his sins with his tears, but also to cover up and bury his past sins by better deeds." (S. Ambr.)

"He who does what he repents of is a scoffer and not a penitent." (S. Chrys.)

"Let flight from the opportunity and withdrawal from the occasion be signs of true sorrow." (S. Bern.)

"Sorrow without amendment is certainly false." (Tert.)

"When Saul said: 'I have sinned,' why did he not get the same answer that David got? Is God an acceptor of persons? God forbid. The words, indeed, of Saul and David were similar, but quite different were the dispositions of their hearts." (S. Aug.)

"Penitents, penitents! If you are indeed penitents and not scoffers, change your life. What will it profit you, O penitents! to be humbled if you are not changed?" (*Id.*)

"O Lord, my God, give sorrow to my heart, grief to my soul, and a fountain of tears to my eyes." (S. Anselm)

DIVISION

1. How should the *sorrow* of a true penitent be?

1°. It should be *supernatural* in its *source* and in its *motives.*

2°. It should be *interior:* "Be sorry in your beds; that is in your hearts." (S. Aug.)

3°. It should be *sovereign* and *universal.*

4°. It should be efficacious, and include a firm purpose of amendment.

2. *How long* should this sorrow last?

True contrition should be permanent. It is necessary to have it,

1°. When one confesses; and

2°. After having confessed; and

3°. One should persevere in it until death.

LXXVI

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

CONFESSION

"Go, shew thyself to the priest." (Matth. viii, 4)
"I confess my sins." (Gen. xli, 9)

Among the Christians of the present day there are some who, by a deplorable blindness, have a great dislike for confession. There are others who go to confession more or less frequently, but there is good reason to fear that many of them do not make their confession as they should. May I point out a remedy for these evils in showing: I. The necessity of confession; II. The qualities it should have.

I. THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION

Why should we confess our sins? We should do so in order to obey Jesus Christ, who wishes that our sins should be forgiven by His priests.

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx, 23)

"Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matth. xvi, 19)

Jesus Christ then appointed them to be judges of consciences; but they cannot pronounce an enlightened judgment if they do not know the sins; sinners must, therefore, make them known.

"From the institution of the Sacrament of Penance the universal Church has always understood that the entire confession of sins was also instituted by the Lord, and is necessary for all who have fallen after Baptism. . . . It is evident that priests could not exercise this judgment without knowing the cause; nor could they even observe equity in imposing punishment if these [penitents] declared their sins in general only and not rather singly and according to the species. Hence it is inferred that all mortal sins, which they recall to mind after a diligent examination of conscience, must be mentioned in confession, even though they are most secret." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 5)

In the Old Law God enjoined a practice which was an image and figure of sacramental confession:

"This is the rite of a leper, when he is to be cleansed, He shall be

brought to the priest: who going out of the camp, when he shall find that the leprosy is cleansed, shall command him that is to be purified to offer for himself two living sparrows." (Levit. xiv, 2)

"Priests have received the power, I do not say, to judge that the body has been purified from leprosy, and the soul from stain, but to purify them directly." (S. Chrys.)

The Sacrament of Penance is absolutely necessary to those who have fallen into sin after Baptism.

"To those who have fallen after Baptism the Sacrament of Penance is as necessary for salvation as Baptism itself to those who have not yet been regenerated." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 2)

"After the promulgation of the Gospel the change from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, into the state of grace, can be effected only by the bath of regeneration, or by a desire to receive it." (Council of Trent, S. vi, c. 5)

"When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, or by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall confess their sin." (Num. v, 6, 7)

"My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel; and confess, and tell me what thou hast done." (Jos. vii, 19)

"Give glory before death. Praise perisheth from the dead as nothing. Give thanks whilst thou art living, whilst thou art alive and in health thou shalt give thanks, and shalt praise God, and shalt glory in His mercies. How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him." (Eccli. xvii, 26–28)

"Many of them that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds." (Acts xix, 18)

"Confess therefore your sins one to another." (Jas. v, 16)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John i, 9)

"Let a man prove himself." (1 Cor. xi, 28)

"The sins must necessarily be known to those to whom is confided the dispensing of the mysteries of God." (S. Basil)

"Let no one say: I deal in secret with God. Has it then been said without cause: whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven? Have the keys of the Church of God been given without cause? We frustrate the Gospel, we make vain the words of Christ." (S. Aug.)

"Let no one say: I do penance in my heart. If you wish Heaven to be opened to you, you must open your mouth to the priest: this is the only entrance to paradise." (S. Aug.)

"Go forth, you who lie sick in the darkness of your conscience, and

in the filth of your sins, make known your sin that you may be justified, for by the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (S. Ambr.)

"The priest must hear the different kinds of sins, so that he may know what to bind and what to loose." (S. Jerome)

"Let those who have the keys of the kingdom of heaven judge before the day of judgment." (S. Jer.)

"You have sinned many times, repent many times; receive the antidote unceasingly." (S. Chrys.)

"Mount up into the tribunal of your mind, there judge yourself; let fear torture you, let confession break out." (S. Aug.)

"Let him who wishes to confess in order to find grace, seek a priest who knows how to bind and to loose; lest, being neglectful regarding himself, he may be neglected by Him who mercifully warns him." (S. Aug.)

"There is nothing more advantageous to man, nothing more helpful to salvation, than to confess a sin immediately after it has been committed." (S. Jerome)

"Confession is an act by which we acknowledge our sins to our Lord, not as to one who is ignorant of them, but in order that the satisfaction may be determined by the confessor." (Tert.)

"Confession is prostrating oneself at the feet of a priest, in order that eternal punishment may be cancelled by temporal pain. When therefore it casts a man down, it rather raises him up; when it accuses, it excuses; when it condemns, it absolves." (Tert.)

"Confession heals, confession justifies, confession obtains pardon of sins: all hope is placed in confession. In confession is the seat of mercy; there is no fault so grave that it may not receive pardon by confession." (S. Isid.)

II. THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CONFESSION

If priests are judges appointed by Jesus Christ, whose place they hold, to pronounce judgment in the case of sinners, these must confess their sins to priests with the same sincerity and the same humility as if they were telling them to Jesus Christ Himself, with (1) a great sincerity, so as to conceal nothing, (2) with a profound humility, making no excuse, two qualities essential to confession.

1. *The sinner must confess his sins with sincerity*

What do you mean, rash sinners, who confess a certain number of mortal sins, while you conceal others?

"Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." (Acts v, 4)

"Iniquity hath lied to itself." (Ps. xxvi, 12)

"Woe is me, because I have held my peace." (Is. vi, 5)

Do you not know that one mortal sin is not forgiven unless all the other mortal sins also are pardoned?—that you commit a fresh sin, a sacrilege? What do you mean? Either you do or you do not wish to save your soul. If you do not wish to save it, it is useless to confess your sins; but if you sincerely desire to be saved, you must make use of the means necessary to obtain pardon of your sins. But there is no other means than that of confessing them all, and this you must do sooner or later if you wish to be reconciled with God.

"He that hideth his sins shall not prosper: but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." (Prov. xxviii, 13)

"The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hidden. The sorrows of a woman in labor shall come upon him." (Os. xiii, 12, 13)

"It is a common fault of mankind both to commit a sin in concealing and to hide the sin committed in denying." (S. Greg.)

"Doth not He [God] consider my ways. . . . If as a man I have hid my sin, and have concealed my iniquity in my bosom." (Job xxxi, 4, 33)

"I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my injustice I have not concealed." (Ps. xxxi, 5)

"I have not concealed my sins, but I have laid them bare, that You might cover them up; I have laid them bare so that You might hide them; for when man lays them bare God covers them; when man conceals them, God lays them bare, when man acknowledges, God pardons." (S. Aug.)

"The sin ought to be told in the confession just as it was in the commission." (S. Greg.)

"[But, alas!] Our remedy often becomes the devil's triumph." (S. Ambr.)

You say: I am ashamed to confess my sins to a man like myself; what opinion will he have of me? No doubt there is reason for shame; but which do you prefer,—that your sins be known now to one man, who is bound to inviolable secrecy, or that they be one day revealed to the whole human race?

"I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will shew thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms." (Nahum iii, 5)

"For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth. For there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace. . . . Be not ashamed to confess thy sins." (Eccli. iv, 24, 25, 31)

"When the Judge shall take His seat, He shall make known whatever will be hidden." (*Eccl. Off.*)

"Those who are unwilling to suffer a salutary confusion now, will suffer shame to their destruction on the day of judgment." (S. Aug.)

"Besides, it is better to bear a little shame before one, than to wither away [through shame] before so many millions of men on the day of judgment, when pointed out by being driven away from God." (S. Aug.)

"Why do you blush to confess your sins? I am a sinner as you; I am a man; I do not think that anything human is foreign to me; man confesses to man; man a sinner to man a sinner." (S. Aug.)

"O man, why do you fear to confess your sins? That which I know in this way I know less than that which I do not know at all." (S. Aug.)

"What is more miserable, what more perverse, than not to be ashamed of the wound itself, which cannot remain concealed, and to be ashamed of the binding up of that wound?" (S. Aug.)

"Be not ashamed to say before one what you were not ashamed perhaps to say and do before many." (S. Aug.)

"How can a doctor heal what a sick man is ashamed to make known?" (S. Jerome)

"He who conceals his sins and blushes to confess them to his advantage, shall be punished by the same God who will judge him." (S. Aug.)

"Why do you fear to confess what you have committed willingly and without hesitation?" (S. Jerome)

"They shall perish with their shame." (Tert.)

"When Satan knew that sin causes shame and that penance produces confidence, that evil spirit inverted the order: he made the penitent feel shame and the sinner confidence." (S. Chrys.)

"Those who are not ashamed to do evil are ashamed to confess it." (S. Chrys.)

"If you are now ashamed to explain your sin to a man who is himself liable to sin, what will you do on the day of judgment, when your conscience will be laid bare before all?" (S. Bern.)

"O perversity! not to feel shame at being defiled, and to feel shame at being cleansed!" (S. Bern.)

"Why are you ashamed to confess your sin, which you were not ashamed to commit? Why blush to confess to God, from whose eyes nothing can be hidden?" (S. Bern.)

"Our God, who is good and merciful, wishes us to confess our sins in this world so that we may not be confounded by them in the next." (S. Aug.)

"In confession we anticipate His coming. Let us condemn ourselves by confessing what we have done, so that when He comes, He may find in us what to reward and not what to punish." (S. Aug.)

2. The sinner must have profound humility, making no excuse

The sinner must confess his sins with humility. To make use of artifices or evasions, to mitigate certain circumstances, to make excuses regarding the cause or the occasion of sin, in order to lessen the shame and confusion, is what pride causes a great number of penitents to do. Thus the passionate man throws the blame of his anger, his oaths, his curses, on his company, his children, his servants, etc.

"Adam said: The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the woman: Why hast thou done this? And she answered: The serpent deceived me and I did eat." (Gen. iii, 12, 13)

"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why dost thou feign thyself to be another? But I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." (3 Kings xiv, 6)

"Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins." (Ps. cxl, 4)

"Humble thy soul to the ancient." (Eccli. iv, 7)

"If I would justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I would shew myself innocent, He shall prove me wicked." (Job ix, 20)

"Wherefore I will not spare my mouth, I will speak in the affliction of my spirit." (Job vii, 11)

"Let others wonder at the chastity of holy Job, at the integrity of his justice, at the depth of his piety; I admire in him the humble confession of sins not less than so many sublime acts of virtue." (S. Greg.)

"God requires confession in order to pardon the humble; He condemns him who does not confess in order to punish the proud." (S. Aug.)

"You have become the defender of your sins; how will God be your deliverer? In order then that He may be your deliverer, be yourself your own accuser." (*Id.*)

"To discover one's sin, and to reveal it in confession when discovered, are signs of true humility." (S. Greg.)

"If you wish to be justified, confess your sins; for a humble confession of sins bursts asunder the bonds of crime." (S. Ambr.)

"We should be ashamed of our fault and correct instead of defending it, since the fault is lessened by shame, but is made greater by defence." (S. Ambr.)

"Confession of sins comforts as much as concealment of them gives pain." (Tert.)

"Penance is the discipline of a humble and prostrate man." (*Id.*)

"This is a new kind of judgment, in which if the criminal excuses himself, he is condemned; if he accuses himself, he is pardoned." (Zeno)

"You excuse yourself and shut up your heart; you shut in the sin and exclude the pardon of the sin." (S. Aug.)

"Forget not hell, which confession extinguishes for you." (Pacian)

"Confess humbly, plainly, and faithfully everything that disturbs your conscience." (S. Bern.)

"All hope of forgiveness and peace is in a true confession; for pretended confession is not confession, but a twofold confusion." (S. Bern.)

"I said, I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord; and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin." (Ps. xxxi, 5)

"The Lord also hath taken away thy sin." (2 Kings xii, 13)

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." (Ps. xxxi, 1)

"Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy." (Hebr. iv, 16)

"For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v, 20)

"Go, shew yourselves to the priests." (Luke xvii, 14)

"That your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii, 19)

LXXVII

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

FREQUENT CONFESSION

"Go, shew yourselves to the priests." (Luke xvii, 14)

What Christ Himself said to those lepers, He commands us to say to sinners who are covered with the leprosy of sin, and of whom these lepers were a figure. Sinners who wish to be absolved from their sins, must present themselves in the tribunal of Penance to those to whom Jesus Christ has said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx, 23). How great are the advantages of confession! In the hope that I may induce you frequently to approach the tribunal of Penance, I undertake to-day to show you: I. What are the advantages of good and frequent confession; II. What is the misfortune of those who keep away from confession.

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF GOOD AND FREQUENT CONFESSION

It must be admitted that confession is a yoke of some weight. It is painful to acknowledge our guilt. But are not the pain and the bitterness softened by the advantages we find in them? In reality, what blessings does not confession bring, (1) to sinners, (2) to the just.

1. *To sinners*

How deplorable is the state of the sinner! He is an enemy of God, a slave of the demon, deserving the pains of hell. Ah! how can sinners remain for one moment in such a state? Why do they not have recourse to the remedy that will guarantee them against eternal death? This remedy is confession, which can: 1°. Blot out their sins and reconcile them with God; 2°. restore to them the rights they lost; 3°. procure for them the peace of a good conscience.

1°. *Confession, well made, will blot out all sins.*

"My iniquities have overtaken me. . . . They are multiplied above the hairs of my head." (Ps. xxxix, 13, 14)

"David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord. And

Nathan said to David: The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die." (2 Kings xii, 13)

"If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." (Is. i, 18)

"His father saw him, and, moved with compassion, . . . said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him." (Luke xv, 20, 22)

"If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed. . . . I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done." (Ezech. xviii, 21, 22)

"Confession and beauty in His sight. Do you wish to be beautiful? Confess: you were foul, confess that you may be beautiful; you were a sinner, confess that you may become just." (S. Aug.)

"He who accuses himself, even though he is a sinner, begins to be just; for the divine vengeance ceases if human confession anticipates it." (S. Ambr.)

"The poison of sin that lay pestiferously concealed in the mind is wholesomely exposed in confession." (S. Greg.)

2°. *Confession can restore to sinners the rights they had lost.*

Sin, by inflicting death on the soul, causes it to lose the sanctifying grace which is its supernatural life, and all the merits which it may have acquired by its good works.

"If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity . . . all his justices, which he had done, shall not be remembered." (Ezech. xviii, 24)

But those good works which were killed by sin take a new life by penance.

"I will restore to you the years which the locust, and the bruchus, and the mildew, and the palmer-worm have eaten." (Joel ii, 25)

"Confession remits sins, restores merits; confession blunts the sting of the worm." (S. Ambr.)

3°. *It procures for them the peace of a good conscience.*

After a good confession the sinner enjoys a sweet interior peace. Freed from the burden of his crimes, he tastes a peace which surpasses all the joys of worldlings. He is no longer troubled by remorse of conscience.

"His is the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding." (Phil. iv, 7)

"Daughter, go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease." (Mark v, 34)

"When you did not confess, your conscience gathered corrupt matter,

the abscess was swollen; it tormented you and did not suffer you to rest: the doctor applies fomentations of words. Do thou recognize the hand of the doctor; confess, in order that the sin may pass away in confession, and the corruption disappear." (S. Aug.)

Why, then, do you not make use of means so efficacious to procure for yourself all these advantages, especially as these means are so easy? For, what must you do to obtain pardon of your sins? Only this, you must confess them with a humble and contrite heart.

What a difference between the tribunal of divine mercy and that of human justice!

"At the tribunal of man it is life or death after confession; but a crown is given after the confession of crimes at the tribunal of God." (S. Chrys.)

If God had demanded more difficult things, should we not have submitted to them?

"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it: how much rather what he now hath said to thee: Wash, and thou shalt be clean?" (4 Kings v, 13)

"Wilt thou be made whole?" (John v, 6)

Would you dare to answer as the sick man answered: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond." (*Ibid.*, 7)

"Go, [therefore] show yourselves to the priests." (Luke xvii, 14)

"Commit thy way to the Lord." (Ps. xxxvi, 5)

Say with the leper in the Gospel:

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. I will, be thou made clean, and forthwith His leprosy was cleansed." (Matth. viii, 2, 3). So yours will also be.

"And you shall find rest to your souls." (*Ibid.*, xi, 29)

"Thou hast broken my bonds, O Lord: I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise." (Ps. cxv 7, 8)

2. *To the just*

For just souls, although they are not exposed to the same calamity as sinners, confession is no less useful, to strengthen them in the practice of good works, to cause them to advance in virtue, to increase their merits, and to enable them to persevere in the grace of God.

"He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xxii, 11)

"Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matth. vi, 20)

Confession is not only useful and necessary in the order of salvation and for the good of our souls; it is also of infinite advantage to society, to maintain peace, tranquillity, and justice. The people who give a

bad example in a parish are certainly not among the number of those who frequently go to confession. Does not confession prevent evils that would be injurious to the public welfare! What restitution and reparation it causes to be made, enemies to be reconciled, discords to be banished, peace to be re-established, homicides to be prevented, treason and rebellion against the state to be checked, obedience and submission to the laws to be given, public duties to be better fulfilled, etc.

By confession the Christian fulfils his duties towards God, becomes charitable towards his neighbors, obedient to his superiors, merciful to the poor, just to all.

II. MISERY OF THOSE WHO KEEP AWAY FROM CONFESSION

Many sinners go to confession at long intervals only, because, they say, the Church does not oblige people to confess oftener than once a year. Others keep away because they do not wish to correct their bad habits, to quit the occasions of sin, to make restitution, which nevertheless is essential to a good confession. But both these classes are in a state of deplorable blindness; they do not see the evils that result from their remaining away from confession. But, I say that the Church requires people to confess at least once a year, in order to prevent sinners from passing their whole life without having recourse to so salutary a means; but she earnestly desires them to confess oftener.

"In the Council of the Lateran the Church decreed that the precept of confession, at least once a year, should be fulfilled by all and every one, when they have arrived at the years of discretion." (Council of Trent, S. iv, c. 5)

There are many reasons that should induce sinners to confess often. The sinner should not defer his conversion, because in doing so, (1) his sins increase, (2) his bad habits grow stronger, and (3) he exposes himself to the danger of final impenitence, which is death in sin.

1. *Their sins increase*

The sinner who goes to confession only at long intervals, deprives himself of the graces of the Sacrament and of the advice of the confessor; he hardly ever enters into himself in order to examine his conscience and find what shape his soul is in. Can he be astonished if he heaps up sin upon sin, if he becomes the slave of bad habits?

"Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness." (Rom. i, 24)

2. *Their bad habits grow stronger*

The sinner, deprived of the special graces attached to the Sacrament of Penance, exposed to the attacks of the enemy, delivered to his own

inclination, which drags him towards evil, will yield to temptation, will follow the attraction of his inclination. The first sin will be followed by others, and the sinner will sink more and more deeply in the abyss.

"Deep calleth on deep." (Ps. xli, 8)

"Woe to you, apostate children, . . . that you might add sin upon sin." (Is. xxx, 1)

"The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth." (Prov. xviii, 3)

His bad habits gain fresh strength each day; at length they gain entire mastery over him.

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is bound fast with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22)

He will confess at Easter. But is it very easy to fulfil a duty properly when one does it only through necessity? What will the examination of conscience be like? Of what kind will be the contrition—the purpose of amendment?

3. *They expose themselves to the danger of final impenitence*

To what does this sinner expose himself? To die in the state of sin, to fall into the horrors of eternal death. Since he remains whole months in the bonds of sin, may he not be surprised by death? Does he think that if God wishes to take him out of this life in an unforeseen manner, He will choose for that the moment when the sinner is in a state of grace? Is there not more reason to fear that death will surprise him in sin, since he passes the greater part of his life in that unhappy state? And even if he should make his confession at death, will he make it as he should?

"Add not sin upon sin. And say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners." (Eccli. v, 5–7)

"Who shall heal thee?" (Lament. ii, 13)

"Go, shew thyself to the priest." (Matth. viii, 4)

DIVISION

Three defects which render confessions null, not to say criminal:

1. *Want of light in the examination.*

1°. The penitent does not make it with sufficient care;

2°. He makes it only according to his prejudices;

3°. He never examines himself on all the duties of his state of life,

on the duties of a father, of a superior, of one employed in a public office.

2. *A want of sincerity in the manifestation.* This want of sincerity is found,

1°. In the expressions used, by which the penitent tries to excuse himself and explain away the sins;

2°. In the motives and causes of actions, to which the penitent hardly ever refers;

3°. In doubtful actions, which he explains to his own credit.

3. *A want of sorrow for sin.*

1°. It is simply a natural sorrow;

2°. It is a sorrow which is founded solely on the fear of the pains of hell; were it not for that fear, many would live as if there was no God.

3°. It is a sorrow which does not include the purpose of amendment.

LXXVIII

PERSEVERANCE

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. x, 22)

You have received pardon of your sins in the Sacrament of Penance. You now possess peace: *"Pax vobis."* May that peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, for ever guard your hearts and your minds.

"The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv, 7)

But will you not lose this precious peace?

To preserve you from this evil, I will show you, I. The obligation under which you are of persevering in grace; II. The means you must make use of in order to persevere.

I. THE OBLIGATION OF PERSEVERING IN GRACE

Three weighty reasons prove the indispensable necessity incumbent on us of persevering in the grace we received by participation in the Sacraments: (1) the danger from which we have emerged; (2) the combats we have to sustain in this life; and (3) the road over which we must travel in order to arrive at eternal happiness.

1. *The danger from which we have emerged*

In what danger were you when God was pleased to visit you by his grace? You were in evident danger of dying in mortal sin! Can you think of that danger without shuddering, and without taking all necessary means to avoid falling into it again?

"Say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins." (Eccli.v, 6)

"He hath strengthened His mercy towards them that fear Him" (Ps. cii, 11)

"Plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee." (Ps. lxxxv, 5)

"[But] who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? . . . or who shall go to pray for thy peace? Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou hast gone backward; and I will stretch out My hand against thee." (Jer. xv, 5, 6)

"It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice,

than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment." (2 Pet. ii, 21)

"Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love." (John xv, 9, 10)

"Till I die I will not depart from my innocence; My justification which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake." (Job xxvii, 5, 6)

"By a change of morals a man is altered, becomes as it were another man, is not known to be what he was, and is not himself at all in a manner, at least he is not his former self. But the dreadful thing is to be thus changed for the worse." (S. Ambr.)

"Know that the demon hates perseverance only, because he knows that it alone is crowned by God." (S. Bern.)

"What will it profit us to follow Christ, if we are not with Him when life ends?" (S. Bern.)

2. *The combats we have to sustain in this life*

Perseverance is necessary for us in order that we may be victorious in the struggle with the enemies of our salvation. You know that this life is an unceasing temptation.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare." (Job vii, 1)

There is question, then, of fighting, and of fighting so as to gain the victory.

"He also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii, 5)

"Without perseverance he who fights does not obtain the victory, nor does the victor obtain the palm." (S. Bern.)

"Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain." (1 Cor. ix, 24)

"He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. x, 22)

S. Paul trembled for himself, so much as to say:

"I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself may become a cast-away." (1 Cor. ix, 27)

But he talks confidently because of his perseverance in the service of the Lord:

"I am even now ready to be sacrificed; and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day; and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming." (2 Tim. iv, 6–8)

"We look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him." (Tob. ii, 18)

"Expect the Lord, do manfully." (Ps. xxvi, 14)

"You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations; and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom." (Luke xxii, 28, 29)

"They believe for awhile, and in time of temptation they fall away." (Luke viii, 13)

"What merit would there be in perseverance, unless we persevere in troubles, trials, and temptations?" (S. Aug.)

"Are you tempted? Persevere to the end, because temptation does not persevere to the end." (S. Aug.)

"We exhort you by the common faith to hold fast our glory by a strong and persevering virtue. We are still in the world; we are still placed in the line of battle; we fight every day for our lives." (S. Cypr.)

"Other virtues deserve a crown; perseverance alone receives it." (S. Bonav.)

"I beseech you, son, and with paternal love warn you who have abandoned Sodom, and are hastening to lofty heights, not to look behind you lest you should let go the handle of the plough, the garment of the Saviour, which you have begun to hold; lest when about to search for the first robe [of innocence] you should abandon the abode of virtue; lest you should return from the field to the house; lest you should love the plains with Lot, or the beauty of the gardens that are not watered from heaven, as holy land, but by the muddy flood of the Jordan. [But, alas!] many have begun, few have persevered to the end." (S. Jerome)

3. *The road over which we must travel*

We should then depend on perseverance alone; and as we are very far from the perfection of S. Paul, the road over which we must travel before crowning the work of our salvation, is a third reason that should induce us to persevere in grace. There are different degrees in virtue.

"The beginning of virtue is one thing, its progress another, its perfection yet another." (S. Greg.)

You have begun well; must you rest there? Many who began well have ended badly. Others began badly, but having ended well, are saved.

"Christians should keep in view not the first steps, but the final end and perseverance. Paul began badly, but ended well; in the beginning

Judas deserved praise, but his end was bad because of his treason." (S. Jerome)

"[The just] shall go from virtue to virtue; the God of gods shall be seen in Sion." (Ps. lxxxiii, 8)

"If the just man shall turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered: in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall die." (Ezech. xviii, 24)

Whatever merits you may have gained, fear always and make every effort to persevere. There is one thing only that can make your reward certain: that is perseverance. If you do not persevere to the end, all the good you will have done will be useless.

"Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought; but that you may receive a full reward." (2 John 8)

"I will pursue after my enemies, and overtake them; and I will not turn again till they are consumed." (Ps. xvii, 38)

"Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways." (Eccli. ii, 16)

"Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way. . . . Be steadfast in the way of the Lord." (Eccli. v, 11, 12)

"A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun; but a fool is changed as the moon." (Eccli. xxvii, 12)

"How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?" (Is. xiv, 12)

"No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix, 62)

"This man began to build, and was not able to finish." (Luke xiv, 30)

"Are you so foolish, that whereas you began in the Spirit, you would now be made perfect in the flesh?" (Gal. iii, 3)

"You did run well, who hath hindered you?" (Gal. v, 7)

"We desire that every one of you show forth the same carefulness to the accomplishing of hope unto the end." (Hebr. vi, 11)

"It is not a great thing to begin that which is good, but to complete it, that alone is perfect." (S. Aug.)

"The virtue that is abandoned before the end of life is of no avail, for in vain does a man run quickly who fails before he reaches the goal." (S. Greg.)

"In a race for an earthly prize, the one who reaches the goal first is

crowned; but in the race for Heaven every one who reaches it merits a crown." (S. Chrys.)

"All our hope rests on the consummation and the end. What does it profit me that the green corn gives hope of a harvest, if before the time of reaping that hope is destroyed by a sudden storm, or a flood? (Euseb.)

II. THE MOST EFFICACIOUS MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE

These are (1) mistrust of ourselves, (2) frequent reception of the Sacraments, (3) prayer.

1. The first means you must adopt in order to assure perseverance is to mistrust yourselves, that is, your own strength; to *avoid occasions of sin,* dangerous company, and everything that might lead you into sin. That is the precaution taken by the disciples after our Saviour's resurrection.

"When . . . the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews." (John xx, 19)

The grace which you have received is a precious treasure; but, alas! you carry that treasure in very fragile vessels. Be on your guard then. Preserve this treasure by the practice of good works.

"Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin." (Eccli. v, 5)

"Then he [the unclean spirit] saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. . . . And the last state of that man is made worse than the first." (Matth. xii, 44, 45)

"I will stand upon my watch, and fix my foot upon the tower." (Habac. ii, 1)

"Thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear." (Rom. xi, 20)

"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12)

Not to advance in the way of the Lord, is to fall back.

"With fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Philip. ii, 12)

2. The second means to be employed is *the frequent reception of the Sacraments.* We are weak and inclined to become careless.

"In many things we all offend." (Jas. iii, 2)

The true means of insuring our success is to have recourse to the Sacraments, which Jesus Christ instituted as remedies for our infirmity. Give to worldly affairs the time that is necessary; but do not neglect the most important affair of all, that of your eternal salvation. Approach the Sacraments frequently. Do not be like those of whom the Prophet speaks:

"They have thought to cast away My price." (Ps. lxi, 5)

"Behold they that go far from thee [O Lord] shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to Thee." (Ps. lxxii, 27)

"Arise, eat; for thou hast yet a great way to go." (3 Kings xix, 7)

"They [the damned] will not free themselves from blame saying: Why are we, who did not understand the importance of perseverance, condemned? It will be said to you, O Man, that if you wished to do so, you could have persevered in that which you understood and possessed. For God would not have abandoned you if you had not abandoned Him, but would have conducted you to eternal happiness." (S. Aug.)

3. The third means *is prayer*. Perseverance is the greatest of all gifts, the seal of our predestination, the condition of our entrance into eternal rest.

"We declare that perseverance is a gift of God by which we continue with Christ unto the end." (S. Aug.)

We must pray for it unceasingly because God grants perseverance only in answer to that prayer which itself perseveres.

"Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"We ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke xviii, 1)

"All these were persevering with one mind in prayer." (Acts i, 14)

"Enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death; lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed against him." (Ps. xii, 4, 5)

"In doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing." (Gal. vi, 9)

"Brethren, be not weary in well-doing." (2 Thess. iii, 13)

"This I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding; that you may approve the better things, that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. i, 9–11)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv, 58)

"Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. ii, 10)

Divisions

I

1. It is *necessary to persevere in grace* because of the dangers to

which we are exposed. We should dread falling again into sin. But the way to make ourselves secure is to strengthen ourselves more and more in the practice of virtue. It is *perseverance which* (1) sustains our merits; *"Nutrix ad meritum"* and (2) assures to us our crown: *"Mediatrix ad coronam."* (S. Bernard)—: two qualities that show us its value.

2. *Means to be employed in order to persevere.*
1°. Flight from dangerous occasions of sin;
2°. Fidelity in the discharge of even the smallest duties;
3°. Mistrust of ourselves and confidence in God;
4°. Constant prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments.

II

1. *Motives that urge us to persevere:*
1°. The rank of the Master whom we serve;
2°. The injury we do to Him when we abandon His service;
3°. The consolation of which we deprive ourselves.

2. *Dangers of inconstancy in virtue:*
1°. The means of salvation which are successfully employed in procuring the conversion of other sinners often become useless to the inconstant and fickle soul;
2°. The obstacles to salvation, which are overcome with difficulty by other sinners, become infinitely more difficult to the changeable and frivolous soul. It is therefore our interest to persevere in justice.

LXXIX

RELAPSE

"You were as sheep going astray; but now you are converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. ii, 25)

When in the state of sin you were the slaves of the devil, that spirit of darkness exercised his empire over you and would have conducted you into the prison of eternal death; but since your resurrection to grace you have been under the empire of Jesus Christ, who promises you everlasting happiness if you remain true to Him. Be on your guard therefore against a relapse into sin.

"Behold thou art made whole; sin no more lest some worse thing happen to thee." (John v, 14)

Because if you fall into sin again: I. Your sin will inflict a greater injury on God; II. Your state will be worse than it was before.

I. THE RELAPSING SINNER INFLICTS A GREATER INJURY ON GOD

Every sin is an injury inflicted on the Divine Majesty, because it is an act of disobedience to His laws and contempt of His benefits; but these odious characteristics of every sin are more clearly seen in the relapse of the sinner, because, 1. the relapse usually contains more malice, and 2. shows a feature of ingratitude and infidelity which is not found in sin that is committed for the first time.

1. *A relapse usually contains more malice*

A sinner is always guilty when he offends God; but sometimes there are found in his first sin circumstances that diminish its gravity, ignorance, an unforeseen occasion, a violent temptation, etc. The relapsing sinner cannot excuse himself because of ignorance of his duties, or of the violence of the temptation, or of the strength of a bad habit. Has he not been instructed, warned? Has he not received in the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist abundant graces to resist temptation? His relapse is, therefore, a sin of pure malice, since he commits it with all the knowledge and all the help that should cause him to avoid it.

"Who as it were on purpose have revolted from Him, and would not understand all His ways." (Job xxxiv, 27)

"Woe to you, ungodly men, who have forsaken the law of the most high Lord." (Eccli. xli, 11)

"If I build up again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a prevaricator." (Gal. ii, 18)

"It is a smaller fault to have sinned before you yet knew the law of God; there is no excuse for sin after you have begun to know God." (S. Cypr.)

"It is no small sin, after having renounced the devil, who is God's rival, and given God the victory over him as a rival, to reverse the order by a relapse into sin, making oneself a source of joy and exultation to the most wicked one, who rejoices at having recovered his lost prey." (Tert.)

"He who, after having done penance and recovered grace, relapses into sin and gives satisfaction to the evil spirit by, as it were, repenting that he had repented, will be displeasing to God in the same proportion as he will be pleasing to God's rival, the devil." (Tert.)

2. *A relapse contains more ingratitude*

In order to be able to understand all the ingratitude of the relapsing sinner, we should be able to understand the greatness of the benefit of reconciliation with God. What was the sinner before he was freed from the slavery of sin by the grace of God? To what evils was he not exposed?

"The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed." (Lament. iii, 22)

Is it not base ingratitude to despise the benefits of God so far as to rebel anew against Him? He awaited the sinner with patience, received him with kindness, and bestowed upon him innumerable benefits; He gave Himself to the sinner in Holy Communion. Ah! was it necessary that the sinner should hide such black treason, such atrocious perfidy under the kiss of peace?

"Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of Him." (Hebr. vi, 6)

"Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever." (Hebr. xiii, 8)

"How [therefore] turn you again to the weak and needy elements, which you desire to serve anew?" (Gal. iv, 9)

"According to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God." (Rom. ii, 5)

"It is a dreadful thing even to say, but does not the relapsing sinner really prefer the devil to God? Having known both, he seems to have made a comparison, and after a deliberate judgment to have pronounced

in favor of the devil, whom he considers better than God, and whose servant, or rather slave, he chooses to be." (Tert.)

"He who sins again after having been pardoned, and wounds himself after having been healed, is not grateful for the tenderness shown to him by Almighty God; nor does he merit to be purified again who defiles himself after having been cleansed by grace." (S. Chrys.)

"To what blind man has Christ given sight twice? What leper has He cleansed twice? What dead man has He raised twice to life? It is not stated that any one was healed more than once, in order that each one may fear to be bound to sin." (S. Aug.)

"[Nevertheless] no one should despair of the divine mercy, no matter how often he may have sinned." (S. Aug.)

"God forbid that any one should think that beause he may easily approach the Sacrament of Penance, therefore he may commit sin without fear, and that the superabundance of divine mercy should produce the sin of human rashness. (Tert.)

"If, illuminated by the Lord and freed from the miseries of sin, we turn again to the same malice, a graver punishment awaits us." (S. Chrys.)

"He who falls again into sin after having been pardoned once, gives God cause to punish him more severely." (S. Basil)

II. THE STATE OF THE SINNER AFTER RELAPSE IS WORSE THAN IT WAS BEFORE

A soul that falls into sin for the first time is to be pitied, since by losing grace it loses the friendship of God. But its misfortune is much greater when, after having been reconciled to God, it falls again into the filth of sin; because its relapse renders (1) its sorrow very doubtful, and (2) its conversion very difficult.

1. *Relapse renders sorrow doubtful*

If man should fear about his sins forgiven, even when he does not relapse: "Be not without fear about sins forgiven" (Eccli. v, 5), with much greater reason should he fear when he does relapse. Because he who easily falls again into sin, especially if he relapses almost immediately after having approached the Sacraments, gives good ground for believing that he has not received the grace of justification, and that the sincerity of his sorrow is very doubtful. What is necessary for true sorrow?

"In true penance there are included hatred of sin and love of God." (S. Aug.)

"There is no real sorrow where there is no amendment." (Tert.)

But how can it be said that this sinner has really renounced sin, that

he has hated it, detested it as he should, when some days later this sin becomes the object of his desires? Will it be said that a man has been really cured when he is seen to relapse very quickly into his illness? Repentance without amendment, repentance very often fruitless, which has need of being repaired by a more sincere repentance, since it has only caused the Sacraments to be profaned. This is why sinners should tremble for their relapses into sin after confession.

"A man that fasteth for his sins, and doth the same again, what doth his humbling himself profit him?" (Eccli. xxxiv, 31)

"If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity . . . all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered . . . and in his sin which he hath committed he shall die." (Ezech. xviii, 24)

"If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity, I will lay a stumbling-block before him . . . he shall die in his sin." (Ezech. iii, 20)

"For three crimes of Damascus, and for four, I will not convert it." (Amos i, 3)

"The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation." (2 Cor. vii, 10)

"I say to you, penitents: What will it profit you to humble yourselves if you do not change?" (S. Aug.)

"He is a scoffer, not a penitent, who continues to do that of which he repents." (*Id.*)

"Those who bewail their sins, and yet do not abandon them, cleanse themselves in vain, and wickedly defile themselves; they wash themselves with their tears in order that being cleansed they may return to their filth." (S. Greg.)

"Such people [those who relapse] never blot out their sins by their tears, because they never cease to commit sin after having wept." (S. Fulgence)

"Isaias says: 'Be ye washed and cleansed.' He is washed and cleansed who weeps for his past sins, and does not again do the things for which he wept. He is washed, but is not made clean, who bewails the sins he has committed, but does not abandon them, and after having shed tears, repeats those things for which he wept." (S. Isid.)

"The repentance of hypocrites, whose sorrow is never sincere." (Tert.)

"This is a new kind of monstrosity: they continually do that which they lament having done." (Salvian)

2. The conversion of the relapsing sinner becomes very difficult

It is with a relapsing sinner as with a sick man who falls again into his illness. The relapse of a sick man usually leads him to the grave.

The cure of a relapsing sinner becomes more difficult either (a) because of the obstacles that are opposed to his conversion, or (b) because of the inefficacy of the remedies, which become useless to him.

a. *Greater obstacles are opposed to his conversion*

What *obstacles* has not the relapsing sinner to fear both on his own part, and on the part of the demon!

On the part of the sinner himself. The first sin committed causes pain, fear, remorse, which often prevent the sinner delivering himself up to evil ways. But as soon as he has passed the barrier that restrained him, he has no longer so great a horror of sin. He becomes familiar with crime, the habit is formed, there is no longer any fear, conscience is dumb, the sinner glories in that at which he used to blush.

"Deep calleth on deep." (Ps. xli, 8)

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22)

"Add Thou iniquity upon their iniquity, and let them not come into Thy justice." (Ps. lxviii, 28)

"The sin that is not blotted out by repentance, by its own weight soon drags the sinner into another sin." (S. Greg.)

"A wound that is reopened heals more slowly; so he who weeps for sin committed and at the same time continues to sin, does not deserve pardon: weeping does no good if the sins are repeated, nor is it any good to ask pardon for sin, while continuing to repeat the evil." (Pet. Blesens.)

Obstacles on the part of the evil spirit, who acquires a new power over the sinner. The devil, driven out of his house by repentance, returns to attack it with new forces. This sinner has not been vigilant, he has made but a feeble resistance, he has even opened the door to the enemy, and from that moment he is the slave, not of one devil only, but of many evil spirits, who are bent on his destruction.

"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first." (Matth. xii, 43–45)

"By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave. . . . For if they [sinners] be again entangled in them [pollutions of this world] and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from

that holy commandment which was delivered to them. For, that of the true proverb has happened to them: The dog is returned to his vomit; and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. ii, 19–22)

"As the dog that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that repeateth his folly." (Prov. xxvi, 11)

"How exceeding base art thou become, going the same ways over again." (Jer. ii, 36)

"The second fall is worse than the first." (S. Bern.)

b. *The remedies that might effect a cure become useless to him*

These remedies are the grace of God, the Sacraments, the word of salvation, and the other helps which the mercy of God offers to him that he might the more easily raise himself up. The relapsing sinner closes his eyes to the light of grace, he receives the Sacraments without the proper disposition, he hears the Word of God without profiting by it, he sees the good example of others and does not imitate them. His wounds become so deep that it would require a miracle to cure them.

"My sores are putrefied and corrupted." (Ps. xxxvii, 6)

"For that uncleanness of the land, it shall be corrupted with a grievous corruption." (Mich. ii, 10)

Hence the great difficulty of recovering from his falls.

"It is impossible [*i. e.,* very difficult] for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance." (Heb. vi, 4, 6)

"If we sin wilfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins." (Hebr. x, 26)

"Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound is very grievous. . . . Thou hast no healing medicine." (Jer. xxx, 12, 13)

"We that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein." (Rom. vi, 2)

"I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice." (Ps. cxviii, 106)

DIVISION

The sin of *relapse* impresses on the sinner as it were a *mark of reprobation,* and he rarely rises up from it, because it is one of those vices which nothing excuses, and from which everything is to be feared.

1. *Enormity of the sin of relapse.*

There is no excuse for a relapsing sinner, because his sin is not the

effect either of surprise, or weakness, or ignorance; it is the most hateful ingratitude, the blackest perfidy, the most bitter contempt.

2. *Danger of the sin of relapse.*

Everything is to be feared from the sin of relapse, because it commonly leads to impenitence, and so to speak, to a state of permanence and tranquillity in crime. In fact,

1°. The means of salvation which generally effect the conversion of other sinners become useless to him who relapses.

2°. Even supposing that he could make use of them, God is in some sense weary of giving them to him.

3°. Even if the goodness of God continue, the peculiar malice of the sin of relapse, joined to the disposition of the human heart, must necessarily lead the sinner to obduracy in sin.

LXXX

ADVANTAGES OF HOLY COMMUNION

"Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down." (John vi, 11)

A power as great and a kindness as tender as those of the Man-God were necessary to feed five thousand men with five loaves. However great this prodigy was, it was nothing in comparison with the miracle our Lord works in the Holy Eucharist for the nourishment of our souls. There is here no material and corruptible bread. It is a heavenly Bread that nourishes the soul. And Jesus Christ not only permits men to eat this heavenly Bread, but He has even given them an express command to do so, the transgression of which results in depriving them of eternal life. The Church renews this commandment every year, and threatens with anathema those who refuse to comply with it. Will it be necessary to have recourse to this means to cause you to submit to the law? No, it will be sufficient to show you the advantages to be gained from holy Communion.

These advantages are found: I. In the intimate union which Jesus Christ contracts with the faithful soul that receives Him in the Eucharist; II. In the graces which He communicates to that soul.

I. UNION OF THE SOUL WITH JESUS CHRIST

Faith teaches us that under the appearances of bread and wine are contained the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which take the place of the bread and wine at the moment of consecration: "The Lord obeying the voice of a man" (Jos. x, 14); that the Blood of Christ, since His resurrection, is united to His sacred Body to be no more separated from it, and thus the faithful soul that receives the adorable Flesh of Christ under the appearance of bread, really drinks of His Blood; that this Body and Blood are hypostatically united to the Divinity; that thus the faithful soul truly receives the Divinity; that the Divinity of the Son being inseparable from that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, the soul receives the three Divine Persons. Thus, when you receive Holy Communion, your body becomes the sanctuary of the Divinity, the Most Holy Trinity resides within you.

"Although He [God] is omnipotent, He could not give more." (S. Aug.)

How does Christ give Himself in the Holy Eucharist? In that holy Sacrament He communicates Himself to us, (1) by a most intimate union, (2) by a union most glorious for us.

1. *A most intimate union, of which Christ Himself has given us a most touching idea*

"My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed; He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in Him." (John vi, 56, 57)

"Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh them as our God." (Deut. iv, 7)

"The effect of the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ is to transform us into that which we consume." (S. Leo)

"Just as if we mix wax melted by heat with other wax similarly melted, so that one piece is seen to be made out of the two, in like manner by the communication of the Body and Blood of Christ, He is in us and we are in Him." (S. Cyril)

O prodigy of the love of God! What more shall I say? Jesus Christ compares this union to the union that exists between Himself and His Father.

"As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." (John vi, 58)

"I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii, 20)

It is no longer the devout communicant who thinks, speaks, acts; it is Jesus Christ who thinks, speaks, and acts in him; or at least he ought to think, speak, and act as Christ would; because if he does not act as the Saviour would, if his life is not conformable to His, it must be said that he has not participated worthily in this divine Food, the peculiar quality of which is to transform us in a certain manner into Jesus Christ. . . . "We are made Christ's."

Those in whom one sees so little change after so many holy Communions, have reason to tremble.

"Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matth. xxviii, 20)

"The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x, 16)

"While the body is nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ, the soul is filled with God." (Tert.)

"We shall be Christ-bearers, that is, we shall carry Christ in us, when we shall have received His Body and Blood into our hearts, and

thus, as Blessed Peter says: We are made partakers of the Divine Nature." (S. Cyril)

"A pledge is given to us, in which we feel the sweetness of, and desire the Fountain of Life itself; in which we feel the overflowing delight, which carries us away from ourselves and above all earthly pleasures." (S. Aug.)

"I am the food of the full-grown; grow and you will eat Me. You will not change Me into yourselves, as you change bodily food, but you will be changed into Me." (S. Aug.)

"Christ incorporated each one of the faithful with Himself by the Mystery." (S. Chrys.)

"We are made one body, members of His flesh and of His bones; and we are changed into that flesh not by charity only, but in very act by the Food that is given us." (S. Aug.)

"A spiritual grafting. . . . If we are joined to His most sacred life, we are made partakers of the Divine Nature and sharers of the divine goods." (S. Dionys.)

"We are made one body and blood with Christ." (S. Cyril of Jerusalem)

"In Holy Communion we are not so closely united to Christ as to be consubstantial with Him; nevertheless, the union is very real and intimate." (S. Cypr.)

"Our Saviour instituted this Sacrament, in which He has, as it were, poured out all the riches of His divine love for men, making a remembrance of His wonderful works." (Council of Trent, S. xiii, c. 2)

2. A union most glorious for us

To understand the glory gained by a faithful soul from the union which it contracts with Jesus Christ, we should be able to understand the infinite distance that exists between God and the creature.

"O wonder! the pauper, the slave, the humble eats the Lord." (Office of the Church)

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor." (Ps. viii, 5, 6)

"David said to [Miphiboseth] . . . Thou shalt eat bread at my table always. He bowed down to him and said: Who am I thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" (2 Kings ix, 7 f.)

However great the favor granted by David to the son of Jonathan, what was it in comparison with the favor bestowed on the faithful soul that receives as nourishment its God, its Redeemer? At that moment the soul becomes the spouse of its God, the temple of the Divinity; it shares in the privilege of the most holy Virgin, in the mystery

of the Incarnation of the Word. What glory! What honor! This God of love is not content with assuming our nature; to satisfy His love He found it necessary to give Himself to each one of us in particular by giving us as food not only the human nature which He took to Himself, but the Divine Nature also. What more could He do to raise up the creature?

"Christ is all in all to us." (S. Ambr.)

If the happiness of a soul that receives Jesus Christ is to be compared to Mary's happiness, what purity, what dispositions does not so precious a gift demand? The Church is filled with astonishment that the Son of God should have descended into the chaste womb of Mary.

"When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb." (*Te Deum*)

What precautions then should we not take to avoid making a monstrous alliance of Belial with Jesus Christ?

"Thou didst feed the people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven, prepared without labor; having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste." (Wis. xvi, 20)

"The Lord of angels becomes man, that man might eat the Bread of angels." (S. Aug.)

"Man eats the Bread of angels as often as he receives the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; for they eat the same Food, although not in the same manner." (S. Lawr. Just.)

"Whilst we are united to Him, we are made one body and one flesh with Christ." (S. Chrys.)

"What shepherd feeds his sheep with his own blood? But He [Christ] feeds us with His own Blood, and in all things unites us to Himself." (S. Chrys.)

"Parents often give their children to others to be nourished. But I, Christ says, do not act thus; I support you with My own Flesh, and I place you close to Myself." (S. Chrys.)

"Consider what distinguished honor, what rank you enjoy at this table." (S. Chrys.)

"By this most sacred Food Christ draws us into His own nature, and makes us like to God." (S. Dion.)

II. THE ADVANTAGES FOUND IN THE GRACES WHICH CHRIST COMMUNICATES TO THE SOUL

Since Jesus Christ gives Himself to the soul in so intimate a manner in the Sacrament of His love, it must be admitted that He has great designs in regard to us, and that we can hope for all kinds of graces by a good Communion.

"He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us

all, how hath He not also, with Him given us all things." (Rom. viii, 32)

The heavenly Manna, which Jesus Christ gives us for food, contains all kinds of virtues and extends to all our necessities. It serves at the same time both as a food and a remedy: (1) as a food, to preserve and increase in us the life of grace; (2) as a remedy, to cure our infirmities and preserve us from the death of sin.

1. *The Holy Eucharist as a Food*

Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine to make known to us the wonderful effects it produces in our souls. For, as bread and wine support the life of the body, preserving and increasing our strength, so *this heavenly Food preserves in us grace, which is the life of the soul,* causes us to increase in virtue, and raises us above ourselves in such a way, that from earthly men we become men all heavenly.

"The Eucharist nourishes the faithful man with itself, and from a worldly man makes him heavenly." (S. Cypr.)

"The Communion makes us like to God." (S. Denis)

The other Sacraments give grace, but this contains the Author of all grace. What strength and vigor do we not then receive in eating this Bread come down from Heaven? Have you ever been more faithful to your duties than on the day when you nourished yourself with this Bread of the strong?

"We come away from this table like lions breathing fire, being made terrible to the devil." (S. Chrys.)

"The adversary is terrified when he sees the lips of a Christian red with the Blood [of Christ]; for he knows that the token of his damnation is at hand, and he cannot endure the instrument of the divine victory by which he was made captive and crushed." (S. Peter Damian)

The Eucharist sustained the first Christians against the attacks of their enemies; in it they found nourishment and strength; and their numbers increased in spite of persecution.

"By the fruits of their corn, their wine and oil, they were multiplied." (Ps. iv, 8)

"The world has been conquered by the Sacrament of the Body of Christ." (S. Aug.)

We should not be so often overcome by the enemies of our salvation, if, following the example of the early Christians, we took the precaution to receive frequently and with proper dispositions the heavenly Bread of the Divine Eucharist. This precious Food would not only preserve in us the life of grace by strengthening us against the enemies

who cause us to lose it; it would increase grace in our souls, and enable us to advance from virtue to virtue. This heavenly Meat gives a fresh increase to all Christian virtues; it animates faith, strengthens hope, and perfects charity.

a) *Holy Communion animates faith*

"They knew Him in the breaking of bread." (Luke xxiv, 35)

"We are nourished not by what we see, but by what we believe." (S. Aug.)

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." (John xx, 29)

b) *It strengthens hope*

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps. xxvi, 1)

"Whilst it is said to me: Where is thy God? Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God . . . the salvation of my countenance and my God." (Ps. xli, 4–7)

"It gives us hope of future things. Indeed He who has given us Himself in this life, will give Himself to us in a much higher degree in the next." (S. Chrys.)

"I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv, 13)

c) *It perfects charity*

"I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me." (Cant. vi, 2)

"What is the characteristic of those who eat the Bread and drink of the Cup of God? They no longer live in themselves, but in Him who died for them." (S. Basil)

"By the Body and Blood which we daily eat and drink in the church we are made partakers in the supreme charity." (S. Aug.)

"The martyrs were inebriated with this chalice when, going to their death, they refused to yield to the entreaties of their relatives." (S. Aug.)

"I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii, 4)

"Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me . . . and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!" (Ps. xxii, 5, 6)

"For what is the good thing of Him, and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins." (Zach. ix, 17)

"Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." (John vi, 54)

"The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world." (*Ibid.*, 52)

"This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die." (*Ibid.*, 50)

"As often as you shall eat this Bread and drink the Chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor. xi, 26)

"The soul that is not strengthened by the reception of the Eucharist, does not remain firm." (S. Cypr.)

"We do not leave unarmed and destitute those whom we rouse up and exhort to combat, but we fortify them by the protection of the Body and Blood of Christ." (S. Cypr.)

"How shall he die to whom food is life?" (S. Ambr.)

"The Body of Christ vivifies, and participation in it leads to incorruption." (S. Cyr. Alex.)

"In this Sacrament Christ calms our raging passions, heals our wounds, and checks our angry thoughts." (S. Cyr. Alex.)

"You come together to break the one Bread which is the salve of immortality, the preservative against death, giving us life always in Christ Jesus." (S. Ignat.)

"To drink this, what is it but to live? Eat life, drink life." (S. Aug.)

"If material food restores day by day our failing bodily strength, the same must be admitted of this immortal Food, in which life itself is given to us." (Paschas.)

"If, as often as the Blood is shed, it is poured out for the remission of sin, I should always receive it, so that my sins may be always forgiven, I who am always committing sin should have medicine always." (S. Ambr.)

2. *The Holy Eucharist as a Remedy*

The soul is purified from all stain by the divine fire of charity, which is communicated to it in the Holy Eucharist. This fire effaces the pollution of sin in such a way that the heavenly Food, which serves as nourishment for the soul, is at the same time a remedy that heals its wounds and cures our infirmities. . . . Have you still some temporal punishment to undergo? This Sacrament will remit it for you, and will end by purifying you. Has your soul been disfigured in the eyes of its chaste Spouse by the daily faults into which even the most holy souls sometimes fall? This heavenly antidote will cure you of this deformity, and give back to your soul its first beauty.

"The antidote by which we are freed from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins." (Council of Trent, S. xiii, c. 2)

"This Sacrament produces a twofold effect in us;—it diminishes the affection for lighter sins, and takes away altogether the consent to those that are graver." (S. Bern.)

Are you overcome by a deadly languor, which gives you a distaste for the things of God?

"Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." (Matth. xi, 28, 30)

"Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. xxxiii, 9)

"Come, eat My Bread and drink the Wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. ix, 5)

"Arise, eat; for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he [Elias] arose, and ate and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mountain of God, Horeb." (3 Kings xix, 7, 8)

"They were persevering in the communication of the breaking of Bread." (Acts ii, 42)

"The poor shall eat and shall be filled: and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: their hearts shall live for ever and ever." (Ps. xxi, 27)

"Give us this day our supersubstantial bread." (Matth. vi, 11)

"This is the Bread of eternal life, which strengthens our soul." (S. Ambr.)

"Christ is my food, Christ is my drink; I do not now await the yearly harvest; Christ is given to me daily." (S. Ambr.)

"Our body attains to immortality, being united to the immortality of the Body of Christ." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"Men take food and drink so as not to suffer from hunger and thirst: but this bestows only that food and drink which renders incorruptible and immortal those who partake of it." (S. Aug.)

"This spiritual nourishment does not permit the nobility of the soul to fail. By this food the image of royalty is faithfully preserved in our souls." (S. Chrys.)

"He will possess us and we shall possess Him." (S. Aug.)

"How will not that soul exult which feels itself made worthy of the presence of the Divine Word?" (S. Lawr. Just.)

"O Lord, it is written of this Bread: All those that withdraw from you shall perish." (S. Ambr.)

"Come, O Lord, and delay not." (Office 2nd Sunday in Advent)

"Lord, I am not worthy, . . . but only say the word," etc.

Divisions

I

Fruits and advantages of Holy Communion.

1. It is a *preservative* for sinners who rise up from the state of sin, and strive not to fall back into it.

2. It is a *strengthening food* for the just; it causes them to increase in virtue, and renders them stronger and more robust.

3. It is a *feast of delights* for the perfect, who taste unspeakable delights in it.

II

There are *three classes of people who do not receive the graces and blessings which God destines for us in the Eucharistic feast:*

1. Those who *rarely approach* it and deprive themselves of the fruits they could draw from more Communions;

2. Those who receive it without having on the nuptial robe, that is to say, *without being in the state of grace;* and who, far from receiving grace in Holy Communion, find in it their condemnation;

3. Those who *receive it with tepidity,* preserving an affection for and an attachment to habitual and dangerous venial sins.

LXXXI

DISPOSITIONS FOR RECEIVING, AND THANKSGIVING AFTER, HOLY COMMUNION

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek." (Matth. xxi, 5)

Jesus Christ is this King. He is so full of goodness that He finds His delight in entering into our souls. Ah! since He takes pleasure in giving Himself to us, let us do all in our power to receive Him worthily. Consider I. What we should do before Communion; II. What we should do after Communion.

I. WHAT WE SHOULD DO BEFORE COMMUNION

When there is question of receiving the Adorable Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, we should address this prayer to God:

"Grant that we may approach with faith, holiness, and desire." (S. Ephrem.)

(1) The Holy Eucharist is a great mystery: we should approach it with faith; (2) It is a Sacrament of life: we should receive it in a state of grace; (3) It is a mystery of love: we should have a great desire to participate in it.

1. *The Holy Eucharist is a great mystery*

The first thing Jesus Christ did, in the design which He had of instituting the Eucharist, was to try the faith of His disciples.

"He sent Peter and John saying: Go and prepare for us the pasch that we may eat. But they said: Where wilt Thou that we prepare? and He said to them: Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water. . . . And he will show you a large dining room furnished; and there prepare. And they going found as He said to them, and made ready the pasch." (Luke xxii, 8–13)

Faith is also the first disposition He demands from us in order to communicate. Our Saviour must dwell in our hearts by faith before we receive Him into our bodies in Holy Communion. But how should our faith be? It should be enlightened, humble, and full of respect.

It should be an enlightened faith. We should be instructed in the truths taught by the Church regarding this adorable mystery.

It should be a faith humble and free from all curiosity. Our senses

cannot penetrate this mystery; we see one thing, we must believe another. We must bring under the yoke of faith not only our senses, but our understanding as well, and not say as the Jews said:

"How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? . . . This saying is hard." (John vi, 53, 61)

"It is hard, but to unbelievers only." (S. Aug.)

"[But] I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief." (Mark ix, 23)

"In receiving this divine mystery we must have a faith free from all curiosity." (S. Cyril Alex.)

"Judge not the matter from the taste; but from faith be fully assured without misgiving that thou hast been vouchsafed the Body and Blood of Christ." (S. Cyr. Jerus.)

"Faith for all defects supplying where the feebler senses fail." (Off. of the Church)

"Sight, touch, and taste in Thee are each deceived; we must trust to faith alone. I believe whatever the Son of God has said. There is nothing truer than this Word of Truth." (S. Thos.)

It should be a faith full of respect. Prepare to receive the Blessed Sacrament with a holy fear. If a great man invited you to his table, how profound would be your respect and modesty.

"The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man, but for God." (1 Paral. xxix, 1)

"Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith." (Heb. x, 22)

"We can understand by a judgment illuminated by faith, and we should believe most firmly." (Council of Trent)

" 'Take ye and eat: this is My Body' . . . who will henceforth dare to doubt? Who, I say, will doubt and say that this is not His Blood?" (S. Cyril)

"Faith has no merit when human reason makes a trial." (S. Greg.)

2. It is a Sacrament of the living and must be received in the state of grace

If you are not in that state, you must have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance.

"Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of the Chalice." (1 Cor. xi, 28)

"What does the word 'prove' mean here? unless it be to purge out the malice of sins, and show oneself acceptable at the table of the Lord?" (S. Greg.)

"Holy things are for those who are holy. If a man is not holy, let him not approach." (S. Chrys.)

"Our life exists in the Body of Christ; let him, therefore, who wishes

to receive life, change his life. If he does not change his life he shall receive life at the judgment." (S. Aug.)

" 'Let a man prove himself.' This proving is necessary, so that no one conscious of mortal sin, however sorry he may seem to himself to be, should approach the Holy Eucharist without having previously made a sacramental confession." (Council of Trent, S. xiii, c. 7)

"Give not that which is holy to dogs." (Matth. vii, 6)

"Without are dogs." (Apoc. xxii, 15)

"Verily, the Bread of children must not be given to dogs." (Office of the Church)

"A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses: how much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. x, 28, 29)

"How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" (Matth. xxii, 12)

"If any senator, or even the agent of a man great in the estimation of the world, wished to dwell with you as your guest, and should say to you: A certain thing in your house is offensive to me; even though you loved that thing, would you not take it away, lest you should offend him whose friendship you coveted?" (S. Aug.)

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. . . . I will, be thou made clean. . . . Shew thyself to the priest." (Matth. viii, 2–4)

3. *It is a mystery of love*

We must have a great desire to partake of it, in order to show our gratitude in some way for that ardent desire which Christ has had to communicate Himself to us in the adorable Sacrament.

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you." (Luke xxii, 15)

"My delights are to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii, 31)

"Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. ix, 5)

"Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood." (Matth. xxvi, 27)

But this desire should be real and sincere; it should come from the bottom of the heart, which, feeling its misery, has recourse to Him who alone can cure it. We must bring to the holy table sighs of sorrow and repentance, of humility and confusion, of love and longing.

"Before I eat I sigh." (Job iii, 24)

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." (Ps. xli, 1)

"Run quickly with longing desire to the fountain of grace." (S. Aug.)

"The stag is so thirsty that he eats serpents. But your vices are serpents. Consume the serpents of iniquity, and then you will more fully desire the fountain of truth." (S. Aug.)

"How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii, 2, 3)

"Come, O Lord, and delay not." (Office 2nd Sunday of Advent)

"We ought to hunger after Christ as our food by desiring Him in our inmost heart." (S. Thos.)

"The hungry are not filled unless they abstain from all vice, and receive the divine Sacraments in the fulness of virtue." (S. Greg.)

"Draw near to it and be enlightened; draw near, it is said, not in carriage, but in soul; not by the movement of the body, but by the affections of the heart." (S. Aug.)

"He hath filled the hungry with good things." (Luke i, 53)

"He hath filled the hungry soul with good things." (Ps. cvi, 9)

"What manner of one is thy beloved of the beloved? . . . He is all lovely." (Cant. v, 9, 16)

"This Bread requires the hunger of the interior man." (S. Aug.)

"Let no one who is squeamish or languid approach; but let all draw near who are eager, burning, and fervent." (S. Chrys.)

II. WHAT WE SHOULD DO AFTER COMMUNION

1. The first thing we should do after having communicated is to *thank the Divine Guest,* who has honored us by taking up His abode in us; to annihilate ourselves in His presence, to pour forth our heart in praise, to acknowledge how utterly powerless we are to thank Him worthily, to call upon all creation to praise Him for and with us.

"All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever." (Dan. iii, 57)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee." (Ps. cii, 1, 2)

This is also the example left us by the Apostles, Judas excepted.

"A hymn being said, they went out unto Mount Olivet." (Matth. xxvi, 30)

"After the morsel Satan entered into him [Judas]. . . . He went out immediately." (John xiii, 27, 30)

"Those who go away before they have made their thanksgiving imitate Judas." (S. Chrys.)

"If thou didst know the gift of God." (John iv, 10)

"Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness." (Wis. viii, 16)

"Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion; for great is He that is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Israel." (Is. xii, 6)

"Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." (Eccli. xiv, 14)

"We are come in a good day." (1 Kings xxv, 8)

"This day is salvation come to this house." (Luke xix, 9)

"The Lord ruleth me, and I shall not want. He hath set me in a place of pasture." (Ps. xxii, 1, 2)

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv, 12, 13)

2. In the second place, after Communion, we should *converse lovingly with Jesus,* place before Him our miseries and our weaknesses, beseech Him to have pity on us, ask of Him the graces we require in order to persevere in the work of our salvation, tell Him of our needs and of the needs of those dear to us.

"Say to my soul: I am thy salvation." (Ps. xxxiv, 3)

"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." (Gen. xxxii, 26)

"Let my Beloved come into His garden [my heart], and eat the fruit of His apple-trees." (Cant. v, 1)

"Who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases?" (Ps. cii, 3)

3. Again, after having received Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, we should *resolve to remain inseparably united to Him.* That is the end He proposed to Himself in instituting the Blessed Sacrament.

"Jesus knowing that His hour was come, . . . having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John xiii, 1)

"Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matth. xxviii, 20)

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." (John vi, 58)

"O God, be not Thou far from me. . . . O God, forsake me not." (Ps. lxx, 12, 18)

"I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go." (Cant. iii, 4)

"My son, give me thy heart." (Prov. xxiii, 26)

"Uphold me according to Thy word." (Ps. cxviii, 116)

It is not then for some days, some months only, but forever, that

Jesus Christ wishes to dwell in us. When He ceases to be there by the real presence of His Body, He desires to dwell there by His grace; so that after having communicated we should desire to live for Him alone. "The same also shall live by Me." (John vi, 58). After this, what shall we say of those Christians who, on going out from the holy table, fall back again into the same sins which they seemed to have given up, engaging themselves anew in the same sinful habits?

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this . . . saith the Lord. My people have done two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. ii, 12, 13)

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." (Ps. vi, 3)

"Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." (Ps. xl, 5)

"He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever." (John vi, 59)

"I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii, 20)

"O sacred banquet, in which Christ is taken," etc.

"May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." (Missal)

Divisions

I

To receive Jesus Christ worthily in the Holy Communion, 1. We must be *free from sin;* 2. We must be *exercised in the practice of virtue.*

1. We must be free from sin.

The principal disposition for receiving Holy Communion is a *great purity of soul.* You owe it

1°. To Jesus Christ, your divine Guest;

2°. To yourselves, because without that disposition this Food, instead of being for you a source of life and salvation, would be the cause of your death and condemnation.

2. We must be exercised in the practice of virtue.

1°. We must be animated by *a lively faith,*

2°. We must be penetrated by *a holy fear,*

3°. We must be inflamed by *a love all divine.*

These are the proximate dispositions required in all who wish to approach the holy table. "Draw near with confidence, with fear, and with love."

II

1. *Necessity of preparation in order to receive the fruits of Holy Communion:*

2. In what this preparation consists:

1°. Purity of conscience;

2°. Sentiments of respect;

3°. Filial fear;

4°. Humble confidence;

5°. Great desire, sorrow, love.

III

1. Importance of thanksgiving;

2. Different sentiments that may be elicited after Communion.

LXXXII

FREQUENT COMMUNION

"A certain man made a great supper and invited many." (Luke xiv, 16)

What is this supper which Jesus Christ wished to represent to us in this parable? It is the Eucharistic banquet. And for this ineffable gift which our Lord offers us, He receives from the greater number of Christians only indifference and ingratitude. Although the Saviour invites them to come to Him and to eat at His table, the greater number, like those whom the Gospel mentions as having been invited, give empty excuses to justify their absence. They feel nothing but disrelish for a Food which they should ardently desire and eagerly receive, a Food in which they would find the source of all grace and the pledge of immortality. Nevertheless, I. There is nothing more pressing than the motives which urge us to communicate often; II. Nothing more frivolous than the excuses we bring forward for not doing so.

I. THERE IS NOTHING MORE PRESSING THAN THE MOTIVES WHICH URGE US TO COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY

For (1) Our Lord desires and invites us to do so; (2) it is in our own interest.

1. *Our Lord desires and invites us.*

Who could fully express the desire that fills the heart of Christ to give Himself to us in the august Sacrament which He instituted to be the Food of our souls?

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." (Luke xxii, 15)

It was to satisfy this desire that He instituted the adorable Sacrament of our altars.

"Jesus took bread . . . and said: Take ye and eat: this is My Body. And taking the Chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood." (Matth. xxvi, 26–28)

As bread and wine were the ordinary and most necessary nourishment of people in the Orient, Christ wished by this choice to make known His desire that men should frequently receive Holy Communion. Is

it not this which He gives us to understand in the parable in which He compares Himself to a man who made a great feast, to which he invited many people?

"He invited many. . . . Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." (Luke xiv, 16, 23)

He sends His servants, who are the ministers of His Gospel, to invite all men. He multiplies Himself, He reproduces Himself, in an infinite number of places, by the power which He has given to His priests to change bread into His Body. Why has He taken such measures and performed such miracles, if not to satisfy the desire He has of uniting Himself to us? He gives to all, to the poor as well as the rich, the most pressing invitation:

"Come, eat My Bread and drink the Wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. ix, 5)

"Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved." (Cant. v, 1)

"My delights were to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii, 31)

"A rich man gives an invitation and the poor man hastens to accept it; we are called to the banquet of God, and we make excuses for not going." (S. Aug.)

It was to correspond to this eager desire of our Saviour that the early Christians received Holy Communion every day.

"They were persevering in the communication of the breaking of bread." (Acts ii, 42)

But the pristine fervor gradually grew cold, and owing to the lukewarmness of many Christians, who would perhaps have remained away longer, the Church was obliged to command that the faithful should receive Holy Communion at least at Easter; but she urges, she exhorts, she entreats her children to receive the Bread of Angels more frequently.

"The holy Synod desires that the faithful assisting at each Mass should communicate not only in spiritual desire, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist." (Council of Trent, S. xxii, c. 6)

2. *Our own interest urges us to communicate often*

The greatest, or to speak truly, the only interest we have to deal with in this world, is the salvation of our soul. But one of the most efficacious means of sanctifying ourselves is the frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; and that for two reasons: 1°. Frequent communion procures a great number of graces for the soul that communicates; and 2°. in order to render itself worthy of these graces, the soul that communicates often brings to the holy table dispositions that contribute very much to its holiness and perfection.

1°. What *an abundance of graces* do we not find in the reception of a Sacrament that contains the Author and Source of all grace? Graces of light that make us know the good we should do, the evil we should avoid. Graces of strength that enable us to triumph over our passions and our spiritual enemies. But if a single Communion well made fills the soul with a great abundance of graces, how much will not this Communion, repeated many times, multiply and increase the heavenly gifts which God pours down on souls that are well prepared? Yes, Holy Communion is the source of graces; it is in it that a God, hidden under the Eucharistic veils, enlightens, strengthens, sanctifies, and purifies us, and makes us perfect.

"The heart is filled with grace." (Office of the Church)

"To communicate every day and to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ is a beautiful and very advantageous custom, He Himself clearly saying: He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life." (S. Basil)

"In vain do we assist at the altar if there is no one to communicate: if thou art not worthy of the Victim nor of the prayer." (S. Chrys.)

2°. Are there not *wonderful helps to holiness* in those dispositions which he who communicates often must bring to the holy table in order to make himself worthy of the graces attached to frequent Communion? He knows that in order to communicate often, it is not enough to have the soul pure and free from all mortal sin, which would cause him to find death in the very Fountain of life; he knows also that he must purify himself from the smallest stains that could be displeasing to the infinite holiness of Him whom he is about to receive. Hence the care he takes to avoid the least imperfections, to be more recollected during prayer, more watchful over the movements of his heart, more prudent in conversation, more reserved in his actions, more patient in suffering, more regular in his whole life. But are not such dispositions efficacious means for sanctifying the soul? What a difference in manners and conduct do we not remark between those who communicate often and those who rarely communicate? Is it not true that libertines seldom, if ever, approach the Sacraments, and that they became what they are only after having abandoned the Source of grace?

Will it be said that there are some who communicate often and who are no better than those who receive Holy Communion only at long intervals? Take care in the first place not to attribute to others vices to which they are not subject. In the second place, remark that those who communicate often and do not become better, cling to the defective dispositions with which they receive Holy Communion.

Whatever the profit may be which is gained from frequent Communion, it will be always true to say that this practice has made saints, and that the best Christians are those who frequently receive the Blessed Sacrament.

"We ask that this Bread be given to us every day, lest, staying away and not communicating, we may be kept at a distance from this heavenly Bread and separated from the Body of Christ." (S. Cypr.)

"We should fear and pray, lest, when any one abstaining is separated from the Body of Christ, he may remain far from salvation, as Christ Himself warns us, saying: Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of man, you shall not have life in you." (S. Cypr.)

"Christ is my food, Christ is my drink. I no longer await the future to be satisfied; Christ is given to me every day." (S. Cypr.)

"By the Body and Blood with which we are daily nourished in the Church, we are made partakers of one supreme Charity." (S. Aug.)

"If as often as the Blood is poured out, it is shed for the remission of sins, I should always receive it so that my sins may be always forgiven. I who am constantly committing sin should receive the medicine constantly." (S. Amber.)

II. FRIVOLOUS EXCUSES GIVEN FOR NOT RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION FREQUENTLY

Is it not astonishing that, notwithstanding the great desire which Christ shows to unite Himself to us in the Sacrament of His love, notwithstanding the advantages we receive from this union, the greater number of men remain indifferent to it?

Some, like those of whom the Gospel speaks, who excused themselves for not going to the supper because they had bought a farm and had to visit it, give as a reason the great amount of business in which they are engaged. Others, like the man who had married a wife and could not leave her, give as an excuse for not communicating often the violence of the passions that tyrannize over them and render them unworthy to receive a Sacrament that demands the greatest purity. This pretence of business and unworthiness must be exposed, by making some see that frequent Communion is not incompatible with business, and by showing others that they can remove the obstacle of unworthiness.

1. To prepare for Holy Communion, business people say, our minds must be recollected. But, how can we prepare for so holy an act when our minds are occupied with our families, our business, our work? Have we leisure to make the necessary proof of ourselves by a serious examination of conscience?

You say that the cares of business do not permit you to recollect yourselves, to examine your conscience. But have you any business more important than that of your salvation? If the question of your salvation does not interest you, I have nothing to say to you, give yourselves up to the business of this world, and abandon that of your salvation. You will experience the same fate as those invited in the Gospel, you will despise the invitation given you by Jesus Christ to eat at His table in this life, you will not taste of the feast of delights which He has prepared for His elect: "None of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper." (Luke xiv. 24)

But does God ask you not to attend to your business? No; you can give to your worldly affairs all the care that is necessary, without forgetting the affair of eternity. Moreover, does your business so occupy your time that you cannot reserve a part of it in which to think of yourselves? You find sufficient time to give the necessary nourishment to your bodies. Do you, then, care less for your souls? You find time enough for parties of pleasure. Do not say it is time that is wanting to you; it is good will; it is tepidity, carelessness regarding your salvation that causes you not to trouble yourselves in the least about it.

2. Admit that the embarrassment of business is not the principal obstacle that prevents you from approaching the holy table. Besides tepidity and carelessness, there is your *attachment to sin,* to the object of a criminal passion; there is some property which is not yours, but which you unjustly retain; there is the hatred which you cherish against your neighbor. These are the obstacles which keep you away from Holy Communion, and furnish you with the pretext of unworthiness, with which you justify your absence from the holy table. But this pretext is useless, since you can easily remove the obstacles. It depends on you only to place yourselves in a state to communicate often, by a change of conduct, the holiness of your lives, and the practice of Christian virtues. In putting off Holy Communion, do you render yourselves more worthy of it? To what do you expose yourselves in not using the means necessary to receive frequently and worthily a Sacrament which, according to the precept of the Church, you should receive at least once a year, and also at the hour of death, a time when you would not wish to be deprived of it? You expose yourselves to the danger of profaning the Sacrament because it is very difficult to do well that which one does but rarely. Then, as you will not crush down your passions and put yourselves in a state of communicating often, these passions will produce in you habits which you will hardly ever root out. Thus when the time arrives for

fulfilling the precept of Communion, you will be even less disposed than you are now, and the Sacrament that should make you holy will become the occasion of your reprobation. Should you not fear also that in punishment for the contempt with which you have treated the Blessed Sacrament during life, you may be deprived of it at death?

Do not say that no matter what you do you will be always unworthy of it; that you will never reach that state of holiness in which you should be in order to receive the God of holiness; that you remain away from Holy Communion through respect, saying with S. Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke v. 8). Undoubtedly one could not be too pure in order to approach the Holy of holies. But Jesus Christ does not require anything impossible; provided our conscience is free from all mortal sin, and that we do not retain any affection for venial sin, we shall be in a state of holiness to which each one can attain, and which is sufficient to allow us to communicate often. Christ requires us to have a sincere desire for our perfection, a desire that makes us employ the necessary means for arriving at it; but the best means for arriving at perfection is frequent Communion. He invites us to make use of this means, notwithstanding our infirmities.

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth. xi, 28)

"One through respect dare not receive each day; another through respect dare not omit a day. Neglect only must not be shown to this Divine Food." (S. Aug.)

"Receive every day that which does you good every day. So live that you may deserve to receive daily. He who does not deserve to receive every day does not deserve to receive every year." (S. Aug.)

"If a man's sins are not so great as that he seems to be excommunicated, he should not abstain from receiving daily the medicine of the Body of Christ." (S. Aug.)

"I neither praise nor blame those who receive the Eucharist every day; but I advise and exhort those whose minds are free from affection to sin, to receive the Holy Communion on Sundays and feasts." (S. Aug.)

"It is presumption not to approach frequently, but to approach unworthily even once." (S. Chrys.)

"A longer interval of time, not purity of soul, is considered a merit. The Pasch is always prepared for him who is pure of heart. (*Id.*)

"Just as there is great danger in receiving Holy Communion coldly, so there is death and destruction in not receiving it at all." (*Id.*)

"There are some who think that they are doing penance when they abstain from the heavenly Sacraments; they judge themselves more se-

verely, but when they impose punishment on themselves they turn away from the remedy." (S. Ambr.)

"To approach unworthily is to deserve a fearful judgment, but to remain away through gross carelessness or contempt, is to incur condemnation." (S. Bonav.)

"If it is Bread and daily Bread, why do you eat it once a year only?" (S. Ambr.)

"There can be but one cause of sorrow for us, to be deprived of this Food." (S. Chrys.)

"If thou didst know the gift of God." (John iv, 10)

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you." (John vi, 27)

"Behold, they that go far from Thee shall perish." (Ps. lxxii, 27)

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi, 69)

Divisions

I

1. The *purity of life* requisite for receiving Holy Communion should not be generally, nor in itself, an obstacle to frequent Communion.

2. *Frequent Communion* itself is one of the most powerful means for attaining to great purity of life.

II

Motives that should induce us to communicate often:

1. We should communicate often because *Christ invites us* to do so, and such, it can be said, has been His design in giving Himself to man under the form of food.

2. We should communicate often because *the Church exhorts us* to do so. We know what the practice of the first Christians was, and what the Church, in the Council of Trent, teaches on this point.

3. We should communicate often because *our needs and our interests urge us* to do so.

LXXXIII

SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION

"Whosoever shall eat this Bread, or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. . . . He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi, 27, 29)

As God is a Being of infinite knowledge, there is nothing, no matter how secret it may be, which He does not see and know. You may tell a lie to God, says S. Augustine, but you cannot deceive Him. With what feelings of humility and fear we would approach the holy table, if we were fully persuaded that this great God enters into us by means of Holy Communion, in order to examine the dispositions of our hearts, and to judge and condemn us if these dispositions are imperfect. Where is the hypocrite who does not tremble at the foot of our holy altars? Where is the false devotee who is not seized with terror when he receives Holy Communion, if he believes that in communicating in mortal sin, he is receiving his Judge and eating his own judgment. Consider: I. The crime of a sacrilegious Communion; II. The punishment of a sacrilegious Communion.

I. THE CRIME OF A SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION

That the gentiles should have adored idols, that the Jews should have often abandoned the religion of their fathers, we can to a certain extent account for by the evils of the times. But that Christians, born in the bosom of the Church, enlightened by the Faith, made the adopted children of God, should declare themselves enemies of God, attack Him in His Person, outrage Him in His own house, dishonor Him in all that is most sublime in His mysteries, in all that is most holy in His religion: —these are things so horrible that there is difficulty in conceiving and giving expression to them. It is the crime of all Christians who are sinners, but especially of those who communicate unworthily. Against these monsters in Christianity thunder-bolts rather than words, chastisements rather than threats, would be necessary. How shall I describe to you the character and the enormity of an unworthy Communion? Listen to S. Paul:

"As often as you shall eat this Bread and drink the Chalice, you

shall shew the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this Bread or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi, 26, 27)

Behold then the enormity of an unworthy Communion—to render oneself guilty of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. How does this happen? (1) Because the infinitely pure Body of the Son of God is united to flesh that is corrupted by sin; (2) Because the Man-God, the adorable Saviour, is attacked directly, personally, and immediately.

1. In order to understand this *monstrous union* which the sinner forms of his own impure flesh with the pure Body of Christ, let us compare the holiness of God with the corruption of a soul in which sin dwells.

"Who is like to Thee, among the strong, O Lord? Who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders?" (Exod. xv, 11)

What does a Christian who communicates unworthily do? He not only sins against Jesus Christ, but he makes a monstrous alliance of his own impure flesh with the Flesh of this God of sanctity. He not only dishonors the Saint of saints, but he obliges Him to dwell in the midst of corruption. The body of a Christian sinner is a corrupt body, a cesspool of infection and rottenness, and in attaching itself to a creature, especially by impurity, it becomes the body of a prostitute. Then, by a result which makes us shudder, the adorable Body of Jesus Christ becomes in a certain sense the body of a thief, of an adulterer, of a prostitute.

"Know you not that he who is joined to a harlot, is made one body? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot?" (1 Cor. vi, 16, 15)

"I was profaned in the midst of them." (Ezech. xxii, 26)

"It is not less abominable to place the Son of God in a polluted mouth than in a dung-pit." (S. Chrys.)

2. An unworthy Communion *attacks God directly and personally.* It is not simple creatures that are offended by an unworthy Communion: it is the Creator Himself. Every time man sins, he breaks a law, he despises the authority of God; but every time he communicates unworthily, he inflicts an outrage on the Author and Promulgator of the law, he tramples under foot the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, whom he crucifies anew, according to the words of S. Paul:

"Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making Him a mockery." (Hebr. vi, 6)

"By transgression of the law thou dishonorest God." (Rom. ii, 23)

"In other sins we offend God in things that are His, but in this we offend Him in His own Person." (S. Peter Damian)

The Sacrifice of the Mass is not a figure of that of the Cross in such a manner as not to be a true sacrifice itself, because it is the same Victim that is offered. It is true, therefore, that the communicant who receives unworthily, renders himself in some manner guilty of all the crimes of the Jews. Like Judas, he gives Christ a sacrilegious kiss. like Caiphas, he believes it is necessary to put Christ to death, so as to allow his passions to live; like Herod, he loads Christ with opprobrium and contempt, by receiving Him into a heart corrupted by sin; like Pilate, who delivered Christ to the will of His enemies, he delivers Him to the fury of his unruly passions, of his hatred, his revenge, his impurity, to the demon himself, because the devil is in the heart of an unworthy communicant as on his throne. Finally, like the executioners, he crucifies Him.

"Oh! how many crimes are committed in one!" (S. Ambr.)

The unworthy communicant, then, renews the awful crime of Calvary in circumstances infinitely more horrible. Jesus Christ died on the Cross through love and obedience; but in the unworthy Communion, what a difference! The act of those who nailed Christ to the Cross was at least beneficial to men; it is for that purpose that He joyfully delivered Himself to death:

"Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." (Hebr. xii, 2)

But what is the result of a sacrilegious Communion if not the anger of God and the condemnation of the sinner? Finally those who crucified our Lord did not know that He was the Son of God:

"If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii, 8)

"And now, brethren, I know that you did it through ignorance." (Acts iii, 17)

But a Christian knows by the light of Faith that Christ is his God, his Saviour, his Judge. There is no excuse for him.

Ah! Lord, you hoped that all was accomplished, that nothing more remained for you to suffer. You said: "It is consummated!" Alas! a thousand fresh outrages, a thousand insults awaited You in the hearts of sacrilegious communicants.

"The criminal is such as if he had killed the Lord and shed the Blood of Christ." (S. Chrys.)

"If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me. I would

perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar." (Ps. liv, 13, 14)

"Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of the Chalice." (1 Cor. xi, 28)

"He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, he shall betray Me." (Matth. xxvi, 23)

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF A SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION

The punishment being proportioned to the offence, we should have difficulty in finding a fitting punishment for the unparalleled crime of a sacrilegious Communion if the Apostle, after having given us an idea of the sin, had not himself pronounced the sentence: "He shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord," that is his crime, as you have seen; "He eats and drinks judgment to himself," that is his sentence.

"These words of the Apostle are so many thunderbolts." (S. Chrys.)

But what does this judgment include, and to what penalty does this sentence condemn the criminal? To lose all he has, (1) of the natural life, (2) of the spiritual life.

1. Jesus Christ is the Principle, the Author, the Master of life and death; and as He often restores health and life to those who communicate worthily, so *Holy Communion is frequently an occasion of death to those who receive it in an unworthy manner.*

"It is death to the wicked, life to the good; though all receive the same, see how different the result." (*"Lauda Sion"*)

"A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy. How much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the Blood of the testament unclean." (Hebr. x, 28, 29)

Public calamities, sickness, lingering illness, sudden deaths, are only too often the punishments inflicted by the justice of God, provoked by sacrilegious Communions. Consult the history of the Church and the Fathers.

"A voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord rendereth recompense to His enemies." (Is. lxvi, 6)

See the visible carrying out of this sentence of death on the Jews and on the wretched Judas. This traitor has scarcely eaten the Body and drunk the Blood of Jesus Christ, when he is abandoned to the fury of the demon.

"After the morsel, Satan entered into him." (John xiii, 27)

"One of you is a devil." (John vi, 71)

"Being hanged, he burst asunder in the midst; and all his bowels gushed out." (Acts i, 18)

The Jews cried out in their blind fury:

"His Blood be upon us, and upon our children." (Matth. xxvii, 25)

And one would almost say that the wounds of Jesus Christ still discharge blood on their unhappy children, despised, hated, cursed by all nations; without country, without law, without altar, without God.

"As yet their meat was in their mouth; and the wrath of God came upon them." (Ps. lxxvii, 30)

2. But that is only the smallest part of the chastisements that fall on the unworthy communicant. He is condemned to *lose the spiritual life of the soul also,* an infinitely greater evil. It is true that every mortal sin deprives the soul of the life of grace; but there remains the hope of recovering it. We have still in Jesus Christ an Advocate who pleads for us. But when, by a sacrilegious Communion, we have crucified Christ, outraged our Advocate, slaughtered our Victim, where shall we find another advocate to plead our cause?

"There is now left no sacrifice." (Hebr. x, 26)

"Unworthy communicants commit graver sins than others; they are more obstinate in evil, and slower to amend their lives." (S. Laur. Just.)

"Woe to such people. It would be better if they had never been born, for they sink more deeply into hell than any other." (Revel. of S. Brigid)

"Every man of your race that approacheth to those things that are consecrated, and which the children of Israel have offered to the Lord, in whom there is uncleanness, shall perish before the Lord." (Levit. xxii, 3)

Judas repented, but his repentance was useless; he died in final impenitence and was damned. Behold the terrible punishment of him who approaches the table of the Lord without being in a state of grace.

"He [the king] saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? . . . Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. xxii, 12, 13)

"Our life exists in the Body of Christ; let him who wishes to receive life change his life. If he does not change his life, he shall receive, not life, but condemnation." (S. Aug.)

What do you think of yourselves now? What do you think of your Communions?

"Is it I, Lord?" (Matth. xxvi, 22)

"Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii, 19)

"You cannot drink the Chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. x, 21)

"Let no one who feels a loathing or is languid, approach; but let all draw near who are stirred up, inflamed, and fervent." (S. Chrys.)

"Try your own selves if you be in the faith; prove ye yourselves." (2 Cor. xiii, 5)

Divisions

I

1. An *unworthy Communion renews the passion of Christ* in all its circumstances: the same perfidy that began the Passion begins the sacrilege; the same cruelty that consummated the one completes the other; the same vengeance that followed the Passion follows the unworthy Communion also. What did the treacherous disciple do?

1°. Judas delivered the Saviour of the world to the Jews; the sacrilegious communicant delivers Christ to His most deadly enemies.

2°. Judas betrayed Christ by a kiss; the profaner betrays Him by signs of the most tender friendship.

3°. Judas delivered Him for vile gain; the unworthy communicant sells Him in order to satisfy the basest passions.

2. I *compare the sacrilegious communicant* to *the barbarous Jews,* and I find in him,

1°. A fury as passionate as theirs;

2°. A malice even more wicked than theirs.

3. God inflicts on the unworthy communicant the same evils with which He overwhelmed the Jews who crucified His Son. These evils are of two kinds, temporal and spiritual.

II

To lose the faith, to look on impiety without horror, to plunge into all kinds of vice, are three almost *inevitable effects of bad communions.*

LXXXIV

EXTREME UNCTION

"They anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." (Mark vi, 13)

The anointing with oil mentioned in these words is, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent, the mark or sign of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, which was instituted by our Saviour. This divine institution was made known by the Apostle S. James in these words of his epistle:

"Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (Jas. v, 14, 15)

These words indicate the minister, the form, the effects, and the matter of the sacrament. Let us consider: I. The effects of Extreme Unction; II. The ceremonies of Extreme Unction and the dispositions required for receiving the sacrament worthily.

I. EFFECTS

Extreme Unction is a sacrament instituted for the spiritual and bodily comfort of the sick.

"The thing signified and the effect of this sacrament are explained in these words: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him. For the thing here signified is the grace of the Holy Ghost; whose anointing cleanses away sins, if there be any still to be expiated, as also the remains of sins; and raises up and strengthens the soul of the sick person, by exciting in him a great confidence in the divine mercy; whereby the sick man being supported, bears more easily the inconveniences and pains of his sickness; and more readily resists the temptations of the devil who lies in wait for his heel; and at times obtains bodily health, when expedient for the welfare of the soul." (Council of Trent, S. xiv, c. 2)

1. *Spiritual Comfort*

Extreme Unction gives the sick patience in his illness, strength to overcome temptations, and fortitude to bear bravely all the terrors of death, and purifies the soul from all remains of sin.

a) It gives patience in sickness. The sick man being in the friendship of God, sustained by His grace, knows that his sufferings will bear fruit in eternity, and knowing that, he suffers without a complaint, without a murmur; he suffers with tranquillity. He cries out with the Apostle:—

"I also suffer these things, but I am not confounded. For I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. i, 12)

"I am filled with comfort. I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations." (2 Cor. vii, 4)

"For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen. . . . For the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal." (2 Cor. iv, 17–18)

b) It gives strength and courage against the temptations and horrors of death! Fear, the sight of the tomb, the terror of God's judgment, all attack the dying man most fearfully. But, soldier of Jesus Christ, what do you dread? You are armed with the sign of the Cross; your eyes, your mouth, all your senses, are strengthened by the efficacious unction of Christian athletes: behold yourself then prepared to fight the battles of the Lord!

"The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. In the day of evils He hath protected me in the secret place of his tabernacle." (Ps. xxvi, 1, 3, 5)

c) Extreme Unction purifies the soul from the remains of sin. What are these remains? They are the temporal penalties which the sinner must suffer in this world or in the next, in expiation of sins already pardoned, or of other lighter faults. These remains of sin are a certain sloth in doing good, a certain disinclination for virtue, a certain languor which follows spiritual sickness. But the holy Unction removes from the soul all the guilt there may be in that weakness.

Extreme Unction even blots out sins. It is called by the Fathers the supplement and complement of Penance. No doubt, the Sacrament of Penance is, after Baptism, the fountain in which God wishes us to purify our souls from sin. Nevertheless, a person may, after having received absolution, fall again into mortal sin of which he is not aware,

and which he does not confess. It may happen that he has not received valid absolution, something which he neither knows nor believes . . . or that he has forgotten some sin. In these cases if he receives Extreme Unction with a true sorrow for sin, he receives the pardon of his faults, as an effect proper to the holy Unction. "If he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

"Let us give unceasing thanks to God, who, as He has opened for us the entrance to true life by the Sacrament of Baptism, so also has instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, in order that on our departure from this life we may more quickly reach heaven." (Catechism of the Council of Trent)

2. *Health of the Body*

Extreme Unction helps to restore the health of the body if such is beneficial to the soul.

Often sick people are terrified when there is question of receiving this Sacrament. They imagine that all is over with them, and that there is no hope of recovery. Help to undeceive them, since Extreme Unction is often a remedy against death itself. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man."

II. CEREMONIES OF EXTREME UNCTION

The anointing of the senses of the sick is made with oil consecrated for that purpose by a bishop. This holy oil signifies the interior grace which the sick person receives.

The words pronounced by the priest when he is anointing the different senses, express the principal effect of the Sacrament. When anointing each sense he says: "By this holy anointing and by His most pious mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast committed by the sight, hearing, etc." (Ritual)

Ardent desires expressed by the Church in favor of her children! These efficacious words effect the remission of sin and the increase of grace at the same time. All this is accompanied by ceremonies and prayers of a sad and touching nature, which I am going to explain to you.

On entering the sick-room the priest wishes peace to the afflicted house and to its inhabitants: "Peace to this house and to all who dwell in it." He sprinkles holy water to purify the sick man and everything that surrounds him, and then recites some prayers. After this preparation he proceeds to anoint the sick person.

He anoints the eyes in order that God may pardon the sinful looks, the seductive glances, the reading of bad books, the criminal curiosity, of which the sick man may have been guilty in the course of his life.

He anoints the ears that God may pardon all the faults which the

sick man may have committed in listening to so many lies, calumnies, obscene songs, impure words.

The priest anoints in like manner the nose, mouth, hands, and feet of the sick person, in order to implore from God's mercy the pardon of the sins committed by the abuse of these senses. In a word, the priest beseeches the Lord to purify all the organs of this Christian, to remit to this soul, which is very soon to quit its body of sin, all the debt contracted during its pilgrimage on earth.

After that the priest redoubles his prayers for the welfare of the sick man.

"Save thy servant, O my God, that trusteth in Thee." (Ps. lxxxv, 2)

Extreme Unction, then, is a sacrament that claims our love, our gratitude, our veneration, as does every help which our Lord in His mercy has prepared for us.

III. DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED TO RECEIVE THIS SACRAMENT WORTHILY

It should be received in a spirit of faith, of prayer, of repentance, and of resignation to the will of God.

1. It is evident that, in order to receive the fruits of Extreme Unction, we must believe with a firm faith all the truths of our holy religion, and in particular, what our Holy Church teaches regarding this Sacrament. Thus the unbelievers and doubters of the world receive the last helps of the dying in a useless and sacrilegious manner, purely as a matter of ceremony, and in deference to what they call vulgar prejudice.

A sincere and lively faith will awaken in us confidence and hope. The Lord will say to each one by the mouth of the priest:

"Be of good heart, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." (Matth. ix, 2)

Perhaps He will add:

"Arise, take up thy bed and walk." (John v, 8)

But whatever may be the sentence which He will pronounce, we may be sure that it will be favorable to us, and we shall say to Him:

"In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust." (Ps. x, 2)

"Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in Thee. . . . My flesh also shall rest in hope, because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt Thou give Thy holy one to see corruption." (Ps. xv, 1, 9, 10)

2. Prayer is a general disposition for all the sacraments, but it is a special disposition for Extreme Unction. The priest must pray over the sick man: "Let them pray over him." It is right, then, that the prayers of the sick person should accompany those of the priest, as far as that is possible in the state of suffering and weakness to which he is reduced.

3. Extreme Unction, as the complement and supplement of Penance, is at the same time a sacrament of the living, and in a certain sense, of the dead. Under this twofold aspect it demands *sorrow for sins* committed. This is why the sick confess their sins before they are anointed. It is, therefore, necessary that those who receive this sacrament should have sorrow for their sins; because God pardons on this condition only.

4. *Resignation to the will of God.* All men must die: "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. ix, 27). When, therefore, a dangerous sickness appears to announce to us the carrying out of this dread sentence, we must submit to it, make a virtue of necessity, offer with a willing heart the sacrifice of this life which God has given to us, and in His mercy preserved and prolonged.

LXXXV

HOLY ORDERS

"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor and hast set him over the works of Thy hands." (Ps. viii, 6)

To be mighty in word and in deed, to raise the dead to life, to banish the evil spirit, to convert sinners, to pardon sins, to point out to all the way of salvation,—such was the occupation of Jesus Christ on earth; and these are the glorious prerogatives that made David cry out in a spirit of prophecy: "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor."

But if Christ possessed all these gifts by right and preference, priests, being His ministers and delegates, possess them by privilege and participation. It is, then, with justice, ministers of the Lord, that I address to you the words of my text, and say with David: "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor," etc. I. There is nothing grander, nothing more elevated in the world than the priesthood; consequently, there are none who deserve our respect more than those who are clothed with it. II. There is nothing in this world more beneficial than the priesthood; consequently, there are none more worthy of our love than those who discharge its functions.

I. POWER OF THE PRIESTHOOD

There is nothing grander, nothing more elevated in the world than the priesthood. "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor."

Whether God inflicts punishments or distributes rewards, His ways are always just and His decrees equitable. Those whom He punishes deserve punishment; those whom He raises up deserve to be honored; and the higher they are raised, the more honor they merit. But in Heaven or on earth there are none whom He has raised higher than priests; therefore, there are none more worthy of our respect. You will be convinced of this if you reflect on the twofold power which God has communicated to His priests, (1) over His real Body (power of orders), and (2) over His mystical body, that is, over the faithful (power of jurisdiction).

1. *Power over Christ's real Body*

In the sacrifices of the Old Law the priest immolated only a victim different from himself; but in the Sacrifice of the New Law it is Jesus

Christ Himself who offers and is offered: "The same Priest and Victim," whence it follows that the Saviour of the world exercises over His Person an authority that belongs to Him, since one cannot sacrifice a victim without having a right over its blood and life. From this there follows another inference. It is that, having substituted priests in His place to continue the Sacrifice that was offered on the Cross, He has given them the same right over His adorable Person, has ordered them to use this divine right, and has appointed them to exercise it. "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Luke xxii, 19). Thus, although in the sacrifice the priest is only the substitute of Jesus Christ, it is certain that Christ submits Himself to him and renders to him every day on our altars the most prompt and exact obedience.

If faith did not teach us these truths, could we persuade ourselves that man could ever attain to such an eminence, and be clothed with a character that places him in a position, if I may dare to say so, of commanding his Sovereign Lord, and making Him come down from Heaven? "God obeying the voice of man." What an astounding miracle!

"The priest is a stupendous miracle, an inexpressible power; he comes in contact with Heaven, dwells with the angels, and treats familiarly with God." (S. Ephrem)

"Truly venerable is the dignity of priests, in whose hands, as in the womb of His Mother, the Son of God becomes incarnate." (S. Aug.)

"At the sight of so great a privilege, Heaven is astounded, earth is amazed, man fears, hell shudders, the devil trembles, the angels adore." (S. Aug.)

"O mighty power! at whose will bread is changed into the Body of Christ; the Word descends from Heaven in the flesh, and is found on the table of the altar. That which has never been given to the angels, was freely bequeathed to those [priests]. The angels minister before the throne of God, priests hold Him in their hands, give Him to others, and receive Him themselves." (S. Laur. Just.)

"The God of Israel hath spared you from all the people, and joined you to Himself, to serve Him in the service of the tabernacle, and stand before the congregation of the people, and minister to Him. (Numb. xvi, 9)

2. *Power over His mystical body*

There is, then, nothing more sublime than the dignity of priests, nothing more worthy of respect than their character. I shall prove this fully by reminding you of the power which they possess over the mystical body of Christ, that is, over the faithful.

It was not an empty word that Christ spoke to His Apostles: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." (Matth. xvi, 19). By these words the Son of God subjects the whole Church to His priests in the person of His Apostle; He bestows on them a power that extends over all the members of His mystical body; there is not on this earth either prince or monarch who is exempt from that jurisdiction, as supreme as it is universal.

A man of humble position is raised by pure liberality to the highest position: "Thus shall he be honored whom the king hath a mind to honor." (Esther vi, 9). See him, the arbiter of all things. Such, and even greater, is the power over His body which God communicates to priests. Who can forgive sins but God alone? said the Pharisees. But the priest forgives them; he binds and unbinds; he not only declares the penitent absolved, but Himself absolves him. One can say to the priest as to Jesus Christ: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and he can answer as Christ answered: "I will, be thou made clean"; and at his command the leprosy of sin vanishes. The priest raises his hand and says: "I absolve thee," and at the sound of his voice all the walls of Jericho fall. What a miracle! The servant is appointed judge on earth, and the Master in Heaven ratifies the sentences pronounced by him.

"God sanctions the sentence of pardon passed by the priest. Heaven is content with the judgment of earth." (S. Chrys.)

It is to priests that the Creator of the world entrusts His cause and His interests; He says to them even more emphatically than to the prophets of the Old Law:

"Judge between Me and My vineyard." (Is. v, 3)

This man is a sinner, he has outraged Me; I could judge him Myself, but I hand Him over to you. The moment you pardon him, I pardon him. Cease then to exalt the power and grandeur of the monarchs of this earth.

"What power, I ask, can be greater than this? The Father gave all power to the Son; and on the other hand I see this same almighty power given by the Son to His priests." (S. Chrys.)

"The supremacy of priests is greater and more powerful than that of kings." (S. Chrys.)

"They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii, 3)

"The priest is constituted a mediator between God and man, God on one side, man on the other; he is less than God, but greater than man." (Innoc. III)

"The priest stands in the midst between God and human nature; bringing down from God the blessings that come to us, carrying up our prayers and appeasing the anger of God." (S. Chrys.)

"To those who dwell on earth is entrusted the power of dispensing the gifts of heaven, to them is given a power which the all-merciful God has never given to angels or archangels." (S. Chrys.)

"The priest is, as it were, the common father of all; it is right therefore that he should take care of and provide for all like God, whose place he holds." (S. Chrys.)

"We should show greater honor to priests than even to our own parents." (S. Chrys.)

"Priests are the vicars of Christ, and he who honors the priest of Christ honors Christ Himself." (S. Chrys.)

"The legate intercedes with God for the whole world." (S. Chrys.)

"The priesthood is the summit of all the good that is in mankind." (S. Ignat. Mart.)

After this shall we be surprised to see the greatest princes of the world show such profound respect for priests? (Examples: Constantine, the Empress Eudoxia, etc.)

But what do we see in our own day? Priests are despised and censured. Their most pious acts are turned into ridicule, their smallest faults are maliciously magnified. Their character is the one that is least respected. Moreover, those who are guilty of these outrages are not idolaters and Jews, but Christians, for whom priests offer the Holy Sacrifice daily.

"If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar." (Ps. liv, 13, 14)

"I respect his character," some say; and with this precaution they think they have a right to say all kinds of evil things about him. But you deceive yourselves. God does not only command you to honor the priesthood in general; He wishes you to honor those who are invested with that dignity. Yes, it is for this particular priest, whatever faults he has, or is supposed to have, that He wishes you to have respect, since you cannot despise him without despising his character, which is inseparable from his person. I go farther. I say that in a sense you give more honor to God and to His Church in not despising a priest who renders himself contemptible than in respecting a priest whose virtues make him worthy of your esteem. When you honor a virtuous priest, you do so because of his personal merit; but when you honor a priest whose life is not exemplary, you pay respect to his sacerdotal character.

"The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not; for they say and do not." (Matth. xxiii, 2, 3)

"I will give you pastors according to My own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine." (Jer. iii, 15)

"With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests. With all thy strength love Him that made thee, and forsake not His ministers: Honor God with all thy soul, and give honor to the priests." (Eccli. vii, 31–33)

"Touch not My anointed, and do no evil to My prophets." (1 Paral. xvi, 22)

"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye." (Zach. ii, 8)

"He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me." (Luke x, 16)

"Worthy of praise is the life of him who holds the priests of Christ in veneration, and does not detract from the dignity of him by whom he has been made a Christian." (S. Jerome)

"God forbid that we should think evil of those who, succeeding to the position of the apostles, with their sacred word bring the Body of Christ down from Heaven." (S. Jerome)

"Consider not the merit of the persons, but the office of the priests." (S. Ambr.)

"Honor priests as fathers, as teachers, as benefactors, as the authors of your Christian life." (S. Clem.)

II. THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD MORE BENEFICIAL THAN THE PRIESTHOOD

Of all the attributes of God there are none that captivate our hearts more surely, or that more justly deserve our love than His goodness and His mercy. But it is especially over the works of these two lovable perfections that He has appointed priests as His ministers. If then we should love God because He is good and merciful, can we dispense ourselves from esteeming priests, who are the instruments of His goodness and mercy towards us? They fulfil this office chiefly, (1) by the exercise of their ministry and (2) by the efficacy of their prayers.

1. *By the exercise of their ministry.* In the creation of the world God did not desire any other ministry than that of His Almighty power in forming man, but in the Redemption He associated to Himself chosen persons, and appointed them His co-operators in saving mankind; these persons are His priests: "We are God's coadjutors." (1 Cor. iii, 9)

A priest, then, is God's co-operator in the works of mercy by the exercise of his ministry, that is, by the administration of the Sacraments, by the preaching of the divine word, and by all that tends to the edification of others. But in this quality what advantage does he not procure for the world? If consciences are laid bare, and the secrets of hearts revealed to him, what tempests does he not calm? What disorders does he not check? What tears of sorrow, what holy desires, take the place of sinful designs?

If we consider the priest announcing the word of God, what wonderful effects does he not produce? How many consciences are moved! how many sinners confounded! how many just consoled! We have, it is true, only one Master among us, says S. Augustine, that is Jesus Christ, who is the Truth and the God of truth; but as He is no longer among us as He was among the Jews, instructing and teaching in person, He established in His place priests, on whom He bestows His spirit and His lights.

"It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matth. x, 20)

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv, 1)

"For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us." (2 Cor. v, 20)

"Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine." (1 Tim. v, 17)

"Priests that rule well by their life and doctrine are esteemed worthy of double honor by their people, who obey them in spiritual matters and supply them with material goods." (S. Aug.)

2. *By the efficacy of their prayers.* A priest, says S. Gregory Nazianzen, is an all-powerful mediator, who has the right to approach God in order to place before Him the prayers and the necessities of the people, and who efficaciously implores His mercy. But, what fruit, what success are not such prayers capable of producing? Because the prayers of a priest are not as those of a private person who prays in his own name. A priest prays in the name of the Church and of all the faithful, of whom he is the minister, and, as it were, the ambassador. Can God refuse anything to his prayers? We are surprised to see striking conversions, astonishing success in affairs that were considered almost hopeless. We ask ourselves, how such things happen. If we went back to the source, we should find it most frequently in the prayers of a good priest. It is true, then, that priests are appointed over the works of mercy of the Lord, that they procure great advantages for the faithful, and that they are not less worthy of our love than of our respect. "Thou hast placed him over the works of Thy hands."

What would I not have to say here against the indifference and even the dislike which some have to-day for priests? But my duty recalls me to that which is the object of this solemnity. I return to you, my dear brother, and in saying to you that the Lord has crowned you with honor and glory and appointed you the minister of His mercies, permit me to say also that He has imposed on you a strict obligation and an indispensable duty, that of being holy yourself and of sanctifying others.

"Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord." (Is. lii, 11)

"You are made a priest. You have not lightened your burden, but bound yourself to a life of stricter restraint, and to a greater perfection of holiness." (*Imit.*, B. 4, c. 5)

"He appointed Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to remember His works, and to glorify and praise the Lord God of Israel." (1 Paral. xvi, 4)

"For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Hebr. v, 1)

"Obey your prelates and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Hebr. xiii, 17)

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor. ix, 11)

Divisions

I

1. The *ecclesiastical state* supplies most advantages in the work of salvation, since in it are found more means, more helps, and more motives for sanctifying ourselves.

2. It is the state in which we can render more glory to God and more service to our neighbor; but it is also that in which one gives more dishonor to God and His Church, and causes more evil to others, when one does not lead a holy life.

II

Qualities of a good pastor.

1. He ought to possess knowledge, in order to instruct his flock and nourish them with sound doctrine.

2. He ought to lead a holy and exemplary life, in order to edify his flock and be a model to them.

3. He ought to have a burning charity, in order to procure the salva-

tion of his flock, and to use every means that will enable him to succeed in that object.

III

Dignity and grandeur of the priesthood.

1. The honor which God wishes us to give to His ministers;
2. The idea which the saints have had of the priesthood;
3. The great powers which Christ has bestowed on His priests, all prove the dignity and the excellence of their state.

IV

The Christian priesthood.

1. Examination of the advantages it holds out to humanity.
2. Examination of the reproaches that are made to it.

V

Excellence of the functions of the sacred ministry.

1. There is nothing nobler than these functions;
2. There is nothing more meritorious;
3. There is nothing more indispensable for a priest.

LXXXVI

MARRIAGE

HOW ONE SHOULD PREPARE FOR IT

"Jesus was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage." (John ii, 2)

Jesus was invited to a marriage feast in the town of Cana in Galilee. He was pleased to assist at it and to sanction the marriage by His presence. He raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament and made it a means of salvation for many. But to profit by this means they must enter the marriage state with good dispositions; they must invite Jesus Christ, by consulting His holy will; they must reflect seriously before contracting marriage. What, then, is necessary in order to enter into this state with pious dispositions? To enter piously into the marriage state, it is necessary: I. To be called to it; II. To have a virtuous intention in entering it; III. To render oneself worthy of the grace which Christ has attached to this Sacrament.

I. CALL TO THE MARRIED STATE

Although a vocation is necessary to any and every state in order to live piously in it, it is specially necessary to the marriage state, in order that married people may sanctify themselves; because the dangers of deceiving themselves in this state arise more frequently, mistakes made in it cause graver results, the burden of the state is weightier. S. Paul thus warns those who are about to enter the married state:

"If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless such shall have tribulations of the flesh. But I spare you." (1 Cor. vii, 28)

Sorrows in the midst of worldly troubles—grief for a husband who has to bear with the faults of a wife—disappointments for a wife—anxiety to bring up children well—all this proves that it is necessary to be called to the married state in order to save one's soul in it. But in order to know the will of God, it is necessary to pray a good deal, to do good works, to take the advice of a prudent director, to consult one's parents. If, as we suppose, the parents are pious people and do not allow themselves to be influenced by passion and selfishness, it is through them that God will make known His will. They know best, as a rule, what suits their children.

Parents must not, however, abuse their authority in order to make their children marry those who are not suitable for them, and with whom they would have much difficulty in saving their souls.

In the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca we see a model for all others. Isaac consulted Abraham, his father, who showed great prudence on the occasion. In this matter Eliezer displayed great fidelity, Isaac showed great confidence in God, and Rebecca a profound respect. The parents of the young woman did not decide anything without her consent.

"Let us call the maid and ask her will." (Gen. xxiv, 57)

Finally, they all took care to consult, not passion or interest, but God.

"Let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord." (1 Cor. vii, 39)

"Houses and riches are given by parents; but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord." (Prov. xix, 14)

"A good wife is a good portion; she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds." (Eccli. xxvi, 3)

"It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself." (Gen. ii, 18)

"The grace of a diligent woman shall delight her husband. . . . Her discipline is the gift of God. Such is a wise and silent woman, and there is nothing so much worth as a well instructed soul. A holy and shame-faced woman is grace upon grace." (Eccli. xxvi, 16–19)

"He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better." (1 Cor. vii, 38)

"He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband." (1 Cor. vii, 32–34)

"Other things being equal, who hesitates to prefer the continent man to him who is married?" (S. Aug.)

"A good wife is justly praised, but a pious virgin is more esteemed." (S. Ambr.)

"Although marriage is good, yet there are many evils that spring from worldly anxiety regarding it." (S. Greg.)

"He who condemns marriage gives loose rein to all uncleanness." (S. Bern.)

II. A VIRTUOUS INTENTION IN ENTERING IT

To enter the married state with a view of giving glory to God, of saving one's soul, of assisting each other in the great work of salvation, and of bringing up the children God may be pleased to give, to be His adorers and the heirs of His kingdom—this is the first object one should have in view on entering the married state,—to form a holy society with the person whom one marries, in order to assist each other in the necessities of life, and especially in the things that concern the salvation of the soul. The second object is to have children and to bring them up in a Christian manner. A third motive that may lead people to marry is to seek a remedy against the evils of concupiscence.

"If they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn." (1 Cor. vii, 9)

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman; but for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. vii, 1, 2)

"A woman shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety." (1 Tim. ii, 19)

"They who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power." (Tob. vi, 17)

"Thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children." (Tob. vi, 22)

"We are the children of saints [Tobias said to Sara], and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose and prayed earnestly both together, that health might be given them. And Tobias said: Lord God . . . Thou knowest that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which Thy name may be blessed for ever and ever. Sara also said: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us grow old both together in health." (Tob. viii, 5–10)

But are these the objects people have in view when getting married? Alas! the greater number have no other guide than a blind passion of selfishness, ambition, or impurity. That being so, should we be astonished at seeing so many divisions and quarrels in families, so many unhappy marriages?

"You have cause for believing that no marriage of this kind is ever

happy: it is brought about by evil, it is condemned by the Lord." (Tert.)

"Many careless people contract marriage, but very few who are vigilant do so; they are vigilant in receiving the dowry, they are careless in considering the wife." (S. Basil)

"Why do you look for a wife with a beautiful face rather than virtue? Let a wife be pleasing for her virtue rather than her beauty; choose her who imitates the virtues of Sara." (S. Ambr.)

"Learn to know what should be sought for in a wife. Abraham did not seek for gold, nor silver, nor possessions, but for the grace of a good heart." (S. Ambr.)

"To support a poor wife is not difficult, but to endure a rich one is torture." (S. Jerome.)

III. HOW TO RENDER ONESELF WORTHY OF THE GRACE WHICH CHRIST HAS ATTACHED TO THIS SACRAMENT

"Do you seek an undefiled wife? be undefiled; do you seek a pure wife? be not impure." (S. Aug.)

"If you are about to marry, do you wish to find your wives such as they find you? Who would wish to marry an unchaste woman?" (S. Aug.)

"A good wife is given to a man for his good deeds." (Eccli. xxvi, 3)

If you live in debauchery, you will find a wife debauched like yourself. You must then lead a virtuous life if you wish to deserve an irreproachable companion. Do not believe, licentious youth, that God will pour down His blessing on marriages which have been preceded by sin and crime, by shameful liberties, by dissolute lives. Do not believe, worldly-minded women, that you will be happy in those marriages which you purchase at the price of your souls, by a criminal love for libertines who make you such fine promises. This is not the way to prepare for receiving the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Young people must visit each other often, no doubt, in order to know each other; but let the visits be short, let them be in the presence of relatives, and made with a view to approaching marriage. Long visits that have no other object than sinful pleasure, should be avoided.

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord. He that driveth away a good wife, driveth away a good thing, but he that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and wicked." (Prov. xviii, 22)

"A diligent woman is a crown to her husband." (Prov. xii, 4)

"Happy is the husband of a good wife." (Eccli. xxvi, 1)

"Let not men please you because they are rich, distinguished, of noble family, of good appearance; but because they are faithful, pious, modest, and good." (S. Aug.)

"It is not the beauty of a woman that delights her husband so much as her virtue and dignity." (S. Ambr.)

" 'With the holy thou wilt be holy; and with the perverse thou wilt be perverted.' (Ps. xvii, 26) If this happens in other states, how much more will it happen in the married state, where there is one flesh and one spirit?" (S. Ambr.)

"As man is considered more skilful in public duties, so is woman in domestic affairs." (S. Ambr.)

"Who shall find a valiant woman? . . . The heart of her husband trusteth in her . . . She will render him good and not evil all the days of her life . . . She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy and stretched out her hands to the poor . . . She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up, and called her blessed; her husband, and he praised her." (Prov. xxxi, 10 ff.)

LXXXVII

MARRIAGE

HOW TO LIVE IN THE MARRIED STATE

"I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." (Eph. iv, 1)

The good order of society depends on the fidelity with which each one fulfils the duties of his state of life. Are you engaged in the married state, apply yourself to perform faithfully the duties of the state you have chosen. What are the duties of married people? They can be reduced to three: I. Mutual love; II. Mutual fidelity; III. Mutual and charitable forbearance.

I. MUTUAL LOVE

As there are different states in life, so there are different graces to sanctify those in each state. What do married people require in order that they may save their souls? A spirit of love and union. This is what S. Paul specially recommends to them:

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it." (Eph. v, 25)

"Understand the measure of love." (S. Chrys.)

Christian spouses, behold the model which you should imitate: you should love each other with a holy, chaste, and lasting love.

1. *With a holy love,* for God's sake, to help each other to practise virtues and good works, together to pray to God, to edify and sustain each other in the practice of what is good and in the fulfilment of duties.

2. Married people should love each other *with a chaste love,* observing the rules of conjugal chastity.

"Marriage honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebr. xiii, 4)

"This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess

his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the passion of lust like the gentiles that know not God . . . For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification." (1 Thess. iv, 3–7)

3. They should love each other *with a constant and persevering love,* which should keep them always united, and prevent them giving way to inconstancy and jealousy, the consequences of which are so dangerous, and which the devil, who is the spirit of discord, sometimes inspires in order to cause divisions between married people. It is a spirit of union and peace which the priest asks for them when he blesses the ring. Nothing should be able to break this union, neither change of fortune nor any other vexatious event. But do married people love each other in this way? Do they love each other with a constant, unchanging love?

"A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh." (Matth. xix, 5)

The husband, then, should not love his wife for her beauty, her fortune, or other temporal advantages she may possess; he should love her for herself alone: "He shall cleave to his wife." If either husband or wife becomes old or infirm, the other should have compassion on and comfort him or her.

"The husband must not be angry with her, but condole with her, assist her, and pray to God for her." (S. Chrys.)

"When one prayeth and another curseth, whose voice will God hear?" (Eccli. xxxiv, 29)

"Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep. Let love be without dissimulation." (Rom. xii, 9)

"Depart not from a wise and good wife, whom thou hast gotten in the fear of the Lord." (Eccli. vii, 21)

"Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter towards them." (Coloss. iii, 19)

"If a wife loves her husband, not because he is chaste, but because he is rich, she really loves her husband's wealth, not himself. If she really loves her husband, she loves him even though he is poor and destitute." (S. Aug.)

"God made Eve neither the superior nor the servant, but the companion of Adam; nor was she taken from the head or the feet of Adam, but from his side, that he might know he was to give her a place by his side, as he learned that she was taken from his side." (S. Ambr.)

"When concord, and peace, and the bond of love exist between husband and wife, all other good things come to them at the same time." (S. Greg.)

II. FIDELITY (1) IN THE USE OF GOODS, (2) IN THE USE OF MATRIMONY, (3) IN PRESERVING THE SANCTITY OF THE MARRIAGE STATE

1. *In the use of goods.* Married people should work together, and according to the will of God, to support the burdens of the married life; because if one pulls down what the other builds up, how shall they establish their house? Therefore there should be neither two purses nor two wills. Wives who waste money in vain ornaments sin against this duty, as also do husbands who squander their money in drink.

"When one buildeth up and the other pulleth down, what profit will they have but the labor?" (Eccli. xxxiv, 28)

2. *Fidelity in the use of marriage.* It is not permitted to refuse the marriage debt through hatred, or revenge, or without a reasonable cause.

"Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife in like manner to the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband. And in like manner the husband also hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud not one another, except perhaps by consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency." (1 Cor. vii, 3–5)

"It is easier for many to abstain altogether from the use of marriage, than to use it reasonably and moderately." (S. Aug.)

"If chastity is observed in the marriage state, condemnation is not to be feared." (S. Aug.)

3. *Finally, conjugal fidelity obliges married people to respect the sanctity of marriage.*

Never do anything against the natural use of marriage through fear of having too many children.

Do not hold scandalous intercourse or unguarded conversations with strangers, nor be desirous of pleasing others. Do not commit the infamous crime of adultery. If Christ condemns sinful looks, how will He treat the fornicator and the adulterer?

"The Lord slew him [Onan] because he did a detestable thing." (Gen. xxxviii, 10)

"Every one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife." (Ezech. xxii, 11)

"If any man commit adultery . . . and defile his neighbor's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress." (Levit. xx, 10)

"Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke xvi, 18)

"What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." (Matth. xix, 6)

"The woman that hath an husband, while her husband liveth is bound to the law; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." (Rom. vii, 2)

"Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." (1 Cor. vii, 27)

"To them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband; and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife." (*Ibid.*, x, 11)

"In marriage the sanctity of the Sacrament is to be valued more than the fruit of the womb." (S. Aug.)

"How can it be called a union where there is not harmony of faith?" (S. Ambr.)

III. THE DUTY OF MUTUAL AND CHARITABLE FORBEARANCE

It is certain that there is no one in the world free from faults; each one has his. It must not be imagined that those who enter the married state will find their partners perfect. In marrying a husband or a wife one espouses at the same time his or her faults and imperfections, and undertakes to bear with them. Whence arise so much disturbance in families, so many quarrels, so much discord, bad treatment, etc.? From a want of mutual helpfulness.

"Bear ye one another's burdens." (Gal. vi, 2)

"Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church." (Eph. v, 22, 23)

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it . . . And let the wife fear her husband." (Eph. v, 28, 29, 33)

"She [St. Monica] learned not to oppose an angry husband, not in deed alone, but not even in word." (S. Aug.)

"The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband." (1 Cor. vii, 14)

"Let wives be subject to their husbands, that if any believe not the

word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives." (1 Pet. iii, 1)

"There is nothing more powerful than a good woman to instruct and mould a man." (S. Greg.)

"It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a quarrelsome and passionate woman." (Prov. xxi, 19)

"Blessed is he that dwelleth with a wise woman." (Eccli. xxv, 11)

"There is no head worse than the head of a serpent; and there is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman." (Eccli. xxv, 22, 23)

"With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men: the concord of brethren, and the love of neighbors, and man and wife that agree well together." (Eccli. xxv, 1, 2)

"For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. For the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man." (1 Cor. xi, 8, 9)

"This is a great Sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church." (Eph. v, 32)

"You have chosen a wife, not a servant; God willed that you should be the guide, not the ruler of the weaker sex. Respect her devoted attachment; give her love for love." (S. Ambr.)

"The true riches, the most precious goods, are gained when husband and wife live in harmony." (S. Greg.)

"They were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." (Luke i, 6)

"This, therefore, I say, brethren: the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; . . . and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii, 29–31)

Divisions

I

Necessity of grace and of a vocation in order to sanctify oneself in the married state

1. Married people have to fulfil duties and obligations that bind in conscience; but they cannot satisfy these obligations without grace and a vocation.

2. They have to bear great trials; but without grace and a vocation these trials cannot be borne.

3. There are very great dangers to salvation which they must avoid; but with grace and a vocation they will not persevere in avoiding them.

II

Marriage must be considered, (1) as a sacrament, (2) as a bond of partnership, and (3) with regard to the education of children.

1. *As a sacrament*

It should be received with an upright intention and in a state of grace. But, alas! how many Christians seem to be ignorant of this truth.

2. *As a bond of indissoluble partnership*

It demands a respectful, faithful, kind, and forbearing love. But through a deplorable subversion, this partnership is every day exposed to rupture.

3. *With regard to the education of children*

They must be nourished and provided for; they must above all things be instructed and brought up in a Christian manner. But what idea do many people form to themselves of these duties? How do they fulfil them?

LXXXVIII

MORTAL SIN

"We that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" (Rom. vi, 2)

To-day I am going to declare war against sin, notwithstanding the empire which it has over man. I must attack this enemy of God's glory and man's happiness. I. Sin is the enemy of God, because of the injury which it does to Him; II. Sin is the enemy of man, because of the great evils it draws down on him who commits it.

I. SIN IS THE ENEMY OF GOD

What is sin? Sin is an act of disobedience to the law of God.

"Disobedience to heavenly commands." (S. Ambr.)

"A word, an act, a desire contrary to the eternal law." (S. Aug.)

"A turning away from the unchangeable Good and a turning to creatures." (S. Thos.)

The sinner becomes guilty towards God, (1) of the most daring rebellion, (2) of the most outrageous contempt, (3) of the blackest ingratitude.

1. *The most daring rebellion*

The natural order requires the servant to be subject to his master, the creature to his Creator.

"It is just to be subject to God." (2 Mach. ix, 12)

But, alas! obedience is given to masters on earth, and it is refused to God, the great Master of all.

"O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. ix, 20)

"Thou dust and ashes . . . Thou hast broken My yoke, thou hast burst My bonds, and thou saidst: I will not serve." (Jer. ii, 20)

Sinners offend God in His presence, they resist Him to His face.

"In Him we live, and move, and are." (Acts xvii, 28)

In a certain sense they dare to use His power and His help in offending Him.

"Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins." (Is. xliii, 24)

Is it possible to imagine a more daring rebellion?

"Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord, our God." (Tob. iv, 6)

"The sinner is an armed and rebellious nothing." (S. Ambr.)

"Sin is an injury to the Divinity." (Salvian)

"It is a cruel and detestable malice that desires to destroy the power, the justice, and the wisdom of God." (S. Bern.)

2. The most outrageous contempt

God deserves that we should prefer Him to all else, because of the excellence of His Being, because of His infinite perfections, and because He alone can make us truly happy.

But what does man do in committing sin? Being unable to serve two masters, God and his passions, he renounces God in order to satisfy his passions.

Is there any contempt more outrageous?

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. ii, 12, 13)

Yes, miser, your god is your money; impure man, your god is the object of your passion; proud, sensual men, . . .

"Whose god is their belly." (Phil. iii, 19)

"He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." (1 John iii, 8)

"They violated Me among My people for a handful of barley and a piece of bread." (Ezech. xiii, 19)

"We have as many gods as we have vices and sins." (S. Jerome)

To forget the benefits one has received from others is what men find it difficult to forgive. To return evil for good displeases them still more. But to use the benefits one has received in order to insult one's benefactor is the very acme of ingratitude. Such are, nevertheless, the degrees of ingratitude of the sinner towards God.

Gifts which God has bestowed on us . . . in the order of nature and of grace . . . Evils from which He has delivered us. . . .

What is our gratitude for so many benefits?

"Remember the days of old . . . He found him [thee] in a desert land, in a place of horror and of vast wilderness; He led him about and taught him; and He kept him as the apple of His eye. . . . He spread His wings and hath taken him and carried him on His shoulders . . . He set him upon high land, that he might eat the fruits of the fields, that he might suck honey out of the rock. [God did these things to thee]. Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish

and senseless people? Is He not thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee? [Alas!] The beloved grew fat, and kicked; . . . he forsook God who made him . . . They sacrificed to devils and not to God, to gods whom they knew not . . . Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee." (Deut. xxxii, 7 ff.)

"I have brought up children and exalted them; but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner . . . but Israel hath not known Me." (Is. i, 2, 3)

Is there a blacker or more revolting ingratitude?

Sinners, do you understand the outrage which sin inflicts on God? . . . Ah! cast your eyes for a moment on Jesus Christ nailed to the Cross.

"This is all the fruit, that the sin thereof should be taken away." (Is. xxvii, 9)

"He gave Himself up for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." (Tit. ii, 14)

"Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery." (Hebr. vi, 6)

"O man, recognize how grave are the wounds for which, according to the decree of Divine Providence, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be wounded." (S. Bern.)

"Why have you attached Me to the more painful cross of your sins? [says Christ]. The cross of sins, on which I hang against My will, is more painful to Me than that which I ascended, moved by pity for men." (S. Bern.)

"The Jews who crucified Christ on this earth, were less guilty than those who offend Him now when He is seated on His throne in Heaven." (S. Denis.)

II. SIN IS THE ENEMY OF MAN

1. The sinner repudiates God in order to attach himself to a creature; God, on His part, turns away from the sinner because of the hatred He has for sin. 2. The sinner makes a bad use of creatures to offend God; God makes use of creatures to punish sinners in a sensible manner.

1. *God loves the works of His hands*

"Thou hatest none of the things which Thou hast made." (Wis. xi, 25)

But sin is not His work. On the contrary, it is a revolt against His infinite Majesty. He cannot then love sin, nor suffer it to go unpunished.

"To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike." (Wis. xiv, 9)

"Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." (Ps. v, 7)

"Your iniquities have divided between you and your God." (Is. lix, 2)

"Because sentence is not speedily pronounced against evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear." (Eccli. viii, 11)

To be the object of God's hatred! . . . To have an all-powerful enemy! . . . Does not this thought make you tremble?

Perhaps you say:

"I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Eccli. v, 4)

But is it nothing to lose the grace of God? And then,

"Wait a little . . . They shall walk in vain, and shall perish." (Job vi, 19, 18)

Happy is the soul that is united to God by grace!

"I will espouse thee to Me in justice." (Os. ii, 19)

"Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee." (Cant. iv, 7)

The sinner loses sanctifying grace. God rejects him:

"You are not My people." (Os. i, 10)

"From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed." (Lament. i, 6)

"How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed." (Lament. iv, 1)

A state of spiritual death, the most deplorable of all states:

"The body dies when the soul leaves it; so the soul dies when God leaves it." (S. Aug.)

"They that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul." (Tob. xii, 10)

Sin destroys or suspends the merit of all past good works.

"If the just man turn himself away from his justice . . . all his justices shall not be remembered." (Ezech. xviii, 24)

"The justice of the just shall not deliver him, in what day soever he shall sin." (Ezech. xxxiii, 12)

God rejects as unworthy of reward all the good works done in a state of sin.

"If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing . . . I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii, 3, 1)

"Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead, . . . and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apoc. iii, 1, 17)

"What he hath cast is a lie, and there is no breath in them." (Jer. li, 17)

"Their works are unprofitable works." (Is. lix, 6)

"We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing." (Luke v, 5)

"Salvation is far from sinners, because they have not sought Thy justifications." (Ps. cxviii, 155)

"Error and darkness are created with sinners; and they that glory in evil things, grow old in evil." (Eccli. xi, 16)

"How exceeding base art thou become, going the same ways over again." (Jer. ii, 36)

"Examine the sinner's conscience; does it not give forth a fouler stench than any sepulchre? (S. Ambr.)

"What hail is to fruit, storms to trees, pestilence to cattle, and a raging tempest to ships, mortal sin is to Christians. It destroys all the fruit and merit of their good works, corrupts the powers of the soul, and leads the whole man to ruin." (S. Cypr.)

2. *In revolting against God the sinner makes a bad use of creatures*

God, in His turn, causes creatures to rise up against the sinner; He uses them as so many instruments of His vengeance:

"By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented." (Wis. xi, 17)

The bad angels sinned, and they were hurled into everlasting flames. The first man sinned, and the earth became sterile. If we look through the different ages of the world, what fearful spectacles present themselves to our eyes! The deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, the Israelites so often in rebellion and so fearfully punished.

"The Lord saw and was moved to wrath . . . I will hide My Face from them, and will consider what their last end shall be . . . I will heap evils upon them, and will spend My arrows among them . . . Without, the sword shall lay them waste, and terror within, both the young man and the virgin, the sucking child with the man in years." (Deut. xxxii, 19–25)

Do not we ourselves feel the effects of these threats every day, in the misfortunes that befall us? Happy are we, however, if we feel the scourge of God's justice in this life only!

"A fire is kindled in My wrath and shall burn even to the lowest hell . . . Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable." (Deut. xxxii, 22, 33)

"He shall rain snares upon sinners: fire and brimstone and storm of winds shall be the portion of their cup." (Ps. x, 7)

"His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins." (Prov. v, 22)

"Woe to you, ungodly men, who have forsaken the law of the Most High Lord, . . . in malediction shall be your portion." (Eccli xli, 11, 12)

"The Lord will remember their iniquities, and visit their sins." (Jer. xiv, 10)

"The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi, 23)

"Miserable man, you are ruining your soul. You have begun to carry your destruction with you on your journey; and yet you do not weep, you do not lament." (S. Cypr.)

"Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." (Rom. vi, 12)

"We that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" (*Ibid.*, 2)

"Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. . . . The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men." (Eccli. xxi, 2, 3)

"Know thou, and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God." (Jer. ii, 19)

"Woe to us, because we have sinned." (Lament. v, 16)

"Understand these things, you that forget God." (Ps. xlix, 22)

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Him [Jesus] you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know most certainly that God hath made both Lord and Christ, this same Jesus whom you have crucified. . . . What shall we do, men and brethren? . . . Do penance." (Acts ii, 22, 23, 36–38)

Divisions

I

1. *The injury sin does to man:*

1°. It inflicts on him a fatal wound, by depriving him of the life of grace;

2°. It robs him of the holiness and the virtues which he had acquired;

3°. It deprives his works of all merit.

2. *The injury sin does to Jesus Christ.*

1°. It has been the cause of His death;

2°. It renews that death (as far as it can do so) every time it is committed;

3°. This renewal of His death is accompanied by a greater outrage than that which he suffered on the Cross.

II

1. *Hatred which God has for sin:* that hatred appears,

1°. From the chastisement which He inflicted on the rebel angels, and on our first parents, and from that which He still inflicts on sinners;

2°. From the severity of the sufferings of His own divine Son;

3°. From the dreadful punishment which He still inflicts on sin in hell.

2. *Hatred which we should have for sin.*

1°. We should not commit it even if in doing so we gained all that the world could give us;

2°. Nor even to avoid death itself.

III

Effects of mortal sin:

1. Blindness of the understanding,

2. Hardness of heart,

3. Trouble and disorder of the passions, leaving the sinner without peace. "There is no peace to the wicked." (Is. lvii, 21)

4. Final impenitence and reprobation.

LXXXIX

VENIAL SIN

"Be ye perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." (Matth. v, 48)

The belief that, in order to attain to perfect sanctity, it is sufficient to avoid the graver sins that exclude the soul from Heaven, without taking care to abstain from venial faults that delay its entry into that blessed kingdom, is a common error, which may have the saddest consequences, because, I. Venial sin is in him who commits it a proof of the little love he has for God; II. It is also a proof of the little zeal he has for his own salvation.

I. IT IS A PROOF OF THE LITTLE LOVE THE SINNER HAS FOR GOD

What is venial sin?

It is an offence against God in a light matter, or in a grave matter without full consent.

There are two kinds of venial sins; some are sins of pure weakness:

"In many things we all offend." (Jas. iii, 2)

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John i, 8)

"There is no man who sinneth not." (3 Kings viii, 46)

Others are sins of malice, which are committed with deliberation and knowledge and which are a proof of what little love one has for God.

"Beware that no one makes little of venial sin, no matter how small it may be, if it is committed deliberately and with full knowledge." (S. Bern.)

God is pleased to call Himself our Father and our Friend—two qualities which should attach us to Him in a special manner and cause us to avoid sin.

1. *God is our Father.* Has there ever been a father more tender, more careful of us? There is no father like Him. He has given us life. He preserves it. He bestows on us abundance of graces and favors. Is it not just that we should obey Him, not only in the greatest matters, but even in the very smallest?

"He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing." (Eccle. vii, 19)

"The son honoreth the father, and the servant his master: if then

I be a Father, where is My honor? and if I be a Master, where is My fear?" (Malach. i, 6)

What would you say of a child who would be content to obey his father in important matters, but would not fear to give him a thousand little annoyances? You fear to lose the friendship of God by mortal sin, because in doing so you would lose Heaven, but you care very little about displeasing Him in those things which, venial though they be, offend Him. You do not love Him then for Himself alone, but rather for your own advantage. You do Him an injury in preferring the satisfaction of your passions to the perfect obedience which you owe to His laws, and in thereby depriving Him of the glory which your obedience would give to Him. Venial sin, however light it may be, is a wrong done to God, an evil which He cannot approve, which He is forced to hate, an evil therefore greater than all earthly evils. Ah! can you regard as trifles those acts of infidelity in the fulfilment of your lighter duties, those distractions . . . those deceits . . . those lies?

"Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me." (Ps. xviii, 13)

"He who obeys God as a son and not as a slave, fears to offend Him in even the smallest thing." (S. Basil)

"Call not light those things by which Christ is offended, by which you are delivered up to the judgment of God; is it not a grave loss, even though you do not perish, to come to port with an empty ship?" (S. Aug.)

"I know not whether we can call light any sin that is committed in contempt of God. He is the most prudent who considers not so much what is commanded as Him who commands." (S. Paulin.)

2. *God is the best of all friends;* there is no friend so generous, so faithful as He.

"God first hath loved us." (1 John v, 19)

"When as yet we were sinners." (Rom. v, 8)

"I will not now call you servants, . . . but I have called you friends." (John xv, 15)

But what are the laws of friendship? What do you require of a friend to whom you are sincerely attached? What would you say if he restricted his friendship to the discharge of essential duties, if he did not wish indeed, to break off the friendship by grossly offending you, but did not mind offending you by showing towards you slight tokens of contempt? Apply this to your own conduct towards God.

"He loves You less, O Lord, who divides his love between You and something which he does not love for Your sake." (S. Aug.)

Your light infidelities are in a certain sense more painful to the heart of God than the outrages of an open enemy.

"I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc. iii, 15, 16)

"If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me." (Ps. liv, 13–15)

"There is no sin so small but that it increases when neglected; for we must consider not what we do, but whom we offend, how good, how kind, how merciful He is." (S. Aug.)

To understand still better how much these faults displease God, although they are light when compared with mortal sin, represent to yourselves the terrible chastisement which He has inflicted on souls that were guilty of them. Moses, because of a slight want of confidence, was not allowed to enter the promised land. The Bethsamites were struck dead for having cast a look of curiosity on the Ark of the Covenant. An Israelite was punished with death for having gathered a little wood on the Sabbath. Consider the punishment of Purgatory. . . .

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matth. xii, 36)

"If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." (1 Cor. iii, 12, 13)

"Every sin, whether great or small, must necessarily be punished, either by man repenting or by God avenging." (S. Aug.)

II. VENIAL SIN IS A PROOF OF THE LITTLE ZEAL WHICH HE WHO COMMITS IT HAS FOR HIS OWN SALVATION

Venial sin does not kill the soul; but it lessens the fear of God and the horror of sin, and thus causes the soul to fall more easily into mortal sin. It is not a complete turning away from our last end, but it is a step that places us in danger of destruction. It must be understood that there is not question here of those in whom a sin, venial in its nature, becomes mortal because of some aggravating circumstance, as scandal, contempt, an intention gravely wicked, grave danger, error, injury, but of him who through tepidity, through indifference, commits venial sin without feeling any qualms of conscience. He must

be made to see that by his multiplied venial sins he disposes himself to fall into much greater crimes.

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." (Eccli. xix, 1)

"He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater." (Luke xvi, 10)

But whence comes this fall from venial sin into that which is mortal?

1. From a just punishment of God; 2, from the bad dispositions of of man.

1. *God does not refuse to him who sins venially the graces necessary to avoid mortal sin,* since He does not refuse such graces to even the greatest sinners. But if He gives the necessary graces, He is not obliged to give the graces of choice and predilection, which cause man to do good infallibly, although of His free will. But does he who commits venial sin act in such a way as to induce God to give him these special graces?

What happens then? In the moment of temptation he yields and commits mortal sin. Have not those who commit venial sin so easily already had this sad experience?

"How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my crimes and offences." (Job xiii, 23)

2. *Evil inclination of man;* an inclination which venial sin gives to the commission of mortal sin.

"No one becomes very wicked all at once." (S. Bern.)

Before he commits great crimes, the sinner has, so to speak, to prepare himself to do so. He has too much horror of them to commit them at first of his own free will; but in committing voluntary venial sins, he insensibly loses fear of the graver sins. How did those people begin who are now guilty of the greatest and most degrading acts of injustice?

"Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth." (Jas. iii, 5)

"They begin with the smallest sins, and fall into the greatest." (S. Bern.)

Judas did not fall all at once into the crime of treason, of deicide.

"How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed?" (Lament., iv, 1)

By the facility with which you commit light faults.

"If we are careless in correcting small faults, we shall be gradually led astray, and shall boldly commit great sins." (S. Greg.)

"He who neglects to repent of and avoid the smallest sins will fall away entirely from the state of grace, not indeed all at once, but by degrees." (*Id.*)

"Let us avoid the smaller sins, since the grave sins spring from them." (S. Chrys.)

"Just as those who are striving to become perfect begin not with great deeds, but with small acts, and gradually attain to higher things; so those who fall into vice do not begin all at once with committing great crimes, but, becoming accustomed to light sins, they are hurried into the greatest." (S. Isid.)

"My iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." (Ps. xxxvii, 5)

"There shall not enter into it anything defiled." (Apoc. xxi, 27)

"Do not despise venial sins because they are small, but fear them because they are many. (S. Aug.)

"The soul devoted to Christ is equally watchful in greater and in smaller matters, knowing that an account must be given for even an idle word." (S. Jerome)

"St. Paula of Rome wept so much for her venial sins that one would believe her guilty of the greatest crimes." (*Id.*)

"From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves." (1 Thess. v, 22)

"Be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving." (Coloss. iv, 2)

"That you may inherit a blessing." (1 Pet. iii, 9)

DIVISIONS

I

Everything in venial sin is to be feared, because

1. A sin, however light it may appear and be, often leads to a greater one, and disposes the soul to commit mortal sin;

2. It dishonors God;

3. However light it may be, it must be expiated, and will be rigorously punished in the next life if it is not atoned for in this.

II

Precautions to be taken against venial sin:

1. To place ourselves in the presence of God and beg of Him the gift of holy fear, which is the beginning of wisdom;

2. To watch over all our actions, and often examine the state of our consciences;

3. To impose some penance on ourselves when we have committed voluntary venial sins.

XC

PRIDE

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled." (Luke xviii, 14)

There are seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and sloth. I shall begin by speaking to you of that which is, as it were, the king of sins, the source of all the others, pride.

"Pride is the beginning of all sin." (Eccli. x, 15). Consider: I. How the proud man resists God; II. How God resists the proud man.

I. HOW THE PROUD MAN RESISTS GOD

What is pride?

"Pride is the inordinate love of one's own excellence." (S. Thomas). To esteem oneself, to despise others, that is the mark of pride, such as it is presented to us in the Pharisee of the Gospel.

"O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican." (Luke xviii, 11)

How many are proud! Do you wish to know how much pride is opposed to God? Judge of it by the following considerations: (1) This sin robs the Creator of the glory that is due to Him, in order to bestow it on a creature; (2) it destroys fraternal charity; (3) it is the source of innumerable other sins.

1. *Pride robs the Creator of the glory that is due to Him*

"To the only God be honor and glory." (1 Tim. i, 17). Of himself man has only nothingness and sin; all that he is, all that he has, he holds from the bounty of God.

"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv, 7)

The proud man imitates the insolence of the rebel angel.

"I will be like the Most High." (Is. xiv, 14)

Idolatry arose from pride; and in this way pride has succeeded in robbing the Creator of the glory that is due to Him.

"Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Eccli. x, 9)

What is the source of this inordinate esteem which you have for

yourself? Is it nobility of birth? But that does not come from yourself. Is it the wealth you possess? Is it the qualities of body or of mind that make you proud? But does not all that come from God? The only thing that brings you honor is virtue. But what is your virtue? A Pharisaical, hypocritical virtue. You perform before men acts of virtue which you would not practise in private.

"He shall be my Saviour; for no hypocrites shall come before His presence." (Job xiii, 16)

"Glory not in apparel at any time, and be not exalted in the day of thy honor." (Eccli. xi, 4)

"If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. vi, 3)

"The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually." (Ps. lxxiii, 23)

"He hath stretched out his hand, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty. He hath run against Him with his neck raised up." (Job xv, 25)

"When all other vices fly from God, pride alone opposes Him." (S. Thos.)

2. *It destroys fraternal charity*

Pride is not less opposed to charity. The man whom this vice dominates, has nothing but contempt for others. See the Pharisee: "I am not as this publican." If he is forced to do justice to merit, he does all he can to tarnish the honor by malicious constructions. He is jealous of another's rise. If he himself is raised above others, he despises them. Hence arrogance, disdain, haughty airs. Ah! how rarely is charity found among the proud!

"Charity is kind, charity envieth not, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil," etc. (1 Cor. xiii, 4)

A proud man will not suffer anything.

"Touch the mountains and they shall smoke." (Ps. cxliii, 5)

Hence those outbursts of passion and anger, and those quarrels.

3. *It is the source of innumerable other sins*

Why do not those who are at enmity become reconciled? Because pride holds them.

"Among the proud there are always contentions." (Prov. xiii, 10)

Why do people go to law on account of real or imaginary injuries? Why are they unwilling to settle disputes? Whence come the lies and calumnies if not from the desire to add to one's own importance at the expense of one's neighbor? Yes, pride brings in its train envy, injustice, anger, and revenge. "Pride is the beginning of all sin." It

darkens the understanding, it puffs up the heart and fills it with numberless ambitious desires. It has been the fatal source of schisms and heresies.

Pride is found in all states of life. No one wishes to be subject; every one desires to command. No one wishes to be warned of his faults and corrected. Some excuse their faults and go so far as to justify their crimes.

"They are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things; whose ways are perverse, and their steps infamous." (Prov. ii, 14, 15)

"He that boasteth and puffeth up himself, stirreth up quarrels." (Prov. xxviii, 25)

"There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit." (Eccli. xix, 23)

"False humility is worse than pride." (S. Aug.)

"Humility makes men like to angels, and pride changes angels into devils; and as I shall clearly show, it is the beginning, the end, and the cause of all sins; because not only is pride a sin, but there has not been, there is not, and there will not be a sin without pride." (*Id.*)

"That pride which is concealed under certain signs of humility, is much more detestable. Indeed I know not how much more disgraceful are those vices that are masked under an appearance of virtue." (S. Jerome)

II. HOW GOD RESISTS THE PROUD MAN

God is not less opposed to pride than pride is to God. It is a rule of divine justice to make the punishment proportionate to the malice of the sin that is to be punished.

1. The proud man who robs God of the glory that is due to Him, is in his turn humiliated by God and overwhelmed with confusion. 2. God permits the proud man who despises others, to become in his turn the object of the mockery and contempt of men. 3. Finally, pride is a poisoned source of innumerable sins, and this source by its contagion, destroys the merit of virtues.

1. *"God resists the proud"* (Jas. iv, 6). Proof in the chastisement of the rebel angels.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer." (Is. xiv, 12)

It is through pride; it is pride that has kindled the everlasting flames.

Absalom . . . Nabuchodonosar . . . Aman . . . Sennacherib . . . Antiochus . . . received dreadful chastisements in punishment of their pride.

"Thou [Sennacherib] has been mad against Me, and thy pride hath come up to My ears. . . . And as he was worshipping his God, Ad-

ramaleck and Sarasar, his sons, slew him with the sword." (4 Kings xix, 28, 37)

"He [Antiochus] laid himself down upon his bed and fell sick for grief, because it had not fallen out to him as he imagined . . . and he died there" (1 Mach. vi, 8, 16) [because] "he proudly entered into the sanctuary . . . and broke them all to pieces." (*Ibid.*, i, 23)

While the proud endeavor to raise themselves up and distinguish themselves, God abandons them and withdraws His graces from them.

"God delivered them up to a reprobate sense." (Rom. i, 28)

"He that holdeth it [pride] shall be filled with malediction, and it shall ruin him in the end." (Eccli. x, 15)

"God hath abolished the memory of the proud." (Eccli. x, 21)

"Professing themselves to be wise they became fools." (Rom. i, 22)

"The house that is very rich shall be brought to nothing by pride; so the substance of the proud shall be rooted out." (Eccli. xxi, 5)

"I hate arrogance and pride." (Prov. viii, 13)

"Pride is hateful before God and men." (Eccli. x, 7)

"Presently after they shall be honored and exalted, they shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke." (Ps. xxxvi, 20)

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble." (Luke i, 52)

"These men . . . despise dominion. . . . Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, . . . and have perished in the contradiction of Core." (Jude 8, 11)

"Pride is the clearest mark of the reprobate, as on the contrary, humility is of the elect." (S. Greg.)

2. *The proud man who despises others becomes in turn the object of their contempt,* either because of the vices into which his pride draws him, or of the pride itself which renders him insupportable.

"Humiliation followeth the proud; and glory shall uphold the humble of spirit." (Prov. xxix, 23)

Should not this confusion be sufficient to cure of his pride him who is infected with this vice? . . . But, no, a proud man will not acknowledge the passion that devours him. Contempt and humiliation serve only to embitter his pride.

"Whose glory is in their shame." (Phil. iii, 19)

"Where pride is, there also shall be reproach." (Prov. xi, 2)

"Thou wilt bring down the eyes of the proud." (Ps. xvii, 28)

"Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain." (Ps. lxxxviii, 11)

"I will bring down the arrogance of the mighty." (Is. xiii, 11)

"I will humble the great ones of the earth." (Is. xlv, 2)

"If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all." (Mark ix, 34)

3. *Pride destroys all virtues.* It is a burning wind, which dries up and consumes everything. The most heroic actions cease to have any merit the moment pride has a part in them.

"They have received their reward [in vain glory]." (Matth. vi, 5)

"Take what is thine and go thy way." (Matth. xx, 14)

What folly, what a misfortune, to work so hard for what is pure loss! Do not value the esteem of men; they praise you to-day, to-morrow they will blame you. Seek only the esteem and the approbation of God.

"Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth." (2 Cor. x, 18)

"Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words." (Tob. iv, 14)

"God became humble, man should blush to be proud." (S. Aug.)

"A proud man is a great misery." (S. Aug.)

"It is intolerable conceit that, when Majesty humbleth Itself, the miserable worm should be puffed and swollen." (S. Bern.)

"He who gathers virtues without humility, carries dust as it were in the wind." (S. Greg.)

"What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?" (Wis. v, 8)

"Woe to you when men shall bless you." (Luke vi, 26)

"God hath scattered the bones of them that please men." (Ps. lii, 6)

"Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." (2 Cor. i, 12)

"Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." (Matth. xi, 29)

Divisions

I

1. Pride renders our work vain, and deprives it of any heavenly reward;

2. It changes virtues into vices;

3. Even in this life it draws down punishment from God, who sometimes permits the proud man to fall into disgrace.

II

1. Pride is unjust, because that in which we take glory is not ours;
2. It is injurious to God, because all glory belongs to Him;
3. It is fatal to man, for it causes him to bear trials without profit, and often leads him to hell by deeds that conduct others to Heaven.

III

Two considerations which we should oppose to pride:

1. By the goodness and liberality of God I am what I am; without Him I should be nothing.
2. Because of my malice and my sin I am less than nothing; I have placed myself below nothingness.

XCI

AVARICE

"You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matth. vi, 24)

If, in the state in which the rich ones of this world find themselves, they could with impunity divide their heart between God and riches, or if they could easily keep the just medium in which they should remain in order to save their souls, perhaps they could without any fear set up great establishments in this world and heap up treasure upon treasure. But experience shows that the more wealth people have, the more attached they become to it. Le us see: I. What are the marks of avarice; II. The difficulty of correcting oneself of this vice.

I. THE MARKS OF AVARICE

Common illusion of sinners: at one time they believe a thing is not a sin when it really is; at another time they consider a fault to be light which is in itself very grave. This is how the avaricious deceive themselves. Even those who are most attached to worldly wealth believe they are least guilty before God.

"Gold and silver hath destroyed many, and hath reached even to the heart of kings, and perverted them." (Eccli. viii, 3)

The really avaricious man can be recognized by the following marks: (1) he places his confidence in this world's wealth; (2) he is eagerly intent on hoarding up riches; (3) losses afflict him grievously; (4) he does not spend money when required to do so by justice or charity.

1. *The avaricious man places his confidence in his riches instead of trusting in God*

"Behold the man that made not God his helper; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and prevailed in his vanity." (Ps. li, 9)

Consider the portrait of the avaricious man, as traced by Jesus Christ Himself:

"One of the multitude said to Him: Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. . . . Jesus spoke a similitude to them, saying: The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits; and he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do

because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater . . . And I will say to my soul—Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." (Luke xii, 13–21)

"Take heed [therefore] and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." (*Ibid.*, 15)

"Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God [who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy]." (1 Tim. vi, 17)

The avaricious man makes a god of his riches:

"Which is a serving of idols." (Eph. v, 5)

"Covetousness, which is the serving of idols." (Col. iii, 5)

"I am become rich, I have found me an idol." (Os. xii, 8)

"The avaricious wish to enjoy money, but to enjoy it as if it were God; since they strive for money not for the sake of God, but rather they worship God on account of money." (S. Aug.)

"The craving for gold is the mother of perfidy, idolatry, and sacrilege." (S. Ambr.)

How wide-spread avarice is and how difficult to cure!

"All have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gains, from the first even unto the last." (Is. lvi, 11)

"From the least of them even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness." (Jer. vi, 13)

"An incurable disease, a furnace that is never extinguished, spread among the rulers of this world." (S. Chrys.)

2. He is eagerly intent on hoarding up riches

The avaricious man employs all means, even those that are unjust, in preserving or increasing his wealth:—usury, dishonest dealing, illegal contracts, etc.; he believes all are allowed!

"He that grieveth the needy and the poor, that taketh away by violence, that restoreth not the pledge, . . . that giveth upon usury, and that taketh an increase: shall such a one live? He shall not live. Seeing he hath done all these detestable things, he shall surely die." (Ezech. xviii, 12, 13)

"Thou shalt not lend to thy brother money to usury, nor corn, nor any other thing." (Deut. xxiii, 19)

Fraud . . . unjust lawsuits . . . extortion . . . monopoly.

"Your hands forge injustice." (Ps. lvii, 3)

"He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." (Prov. xxviii, 20)

What is there that the avaricious man is incapable of?

"What will you give me and I will deliver Him unto you?" (Matth. xxvi, 15)

"They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi, 9)

"Treason, fraud, deceit, perjury, restlessness and violence spring from avarice." (S. Greg.)

"The avaricious man is the common enemy of all." (S. Chrys.)

"Avarice is an enemy of Christ." (S. Aug.)

3. *Losses afflict him grievously*

The avaricious man is filled with sadness if he meets with any pecuniary loss. An unselfish rich man says:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21)

The feelings of the avaricious man are very different: he is impatient, he cries out, he murmurs, he is in despair:

"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house." (Prov. xv, 27)

"A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money; and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them." (Eccle. v, 9)

4. *The avaricious man does not use his wealth as justice and charity require*

He does not pay his debts, he refuses to pay fair wages, he oppresses the weak, he is insensible to the miseries of the poor.

"Lazarus desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him." (Luke xvi, 21)

"The spoil of the poor is in your house." (Is. iii, 14)

"For the crime of stealing from the owner is not greater than that of refusing to assist the needy, when you can help them out of your abundance." (S. Ambr.)

"Wretched man, what answer will you give to the Judge? You adorn your walls, you do not clothe your fellow-creature; you decorate your horses with trappings, and you despise your brother clothed in rags." (S. Ambr.)

He refuses to himself the most necessary things. Of what use then is his money to him?

"Riches are not comely for a covetous man and a niggard, and what should an envious man do with gold?" (Eccli. xiv, 3)

"The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger." (Ps. xxxiii, 11)

"He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good?" (Eccli. xiv, 5)

"There is none worse than he that envieth himself, and this is the reward of his wickedness." (*Ibid.*, 6)

"Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. . . . There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale; because while he liveth he hath cast away his bowels." (Eccli. x, 9, 10)

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered. . . . Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." (Jas. v, 1–4)

"The avaricious man is as little satisfied by what he possesses as by what he does not possess; for he covets what he has not, and fears to lose what he has." (S. Jerome)

"Happy is he who has not gone after those things, the possession of which is a burden, the love, pollution, and the loss, torment." (S. Bern.)

"The avaricious man is liberal with the goods of another, but miserly with his own; he avoids gluttony in order to fill up the money-box; he reduces his body in order to increase his gains." (*Id.*)

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF CORRECTING ONESELF OF THIS VICE

Of all sinners the avaricious man is the most difficult to convert. The other passions are usually got rid of either by satisfying one's desires, or by an unpleasant result, or by sickness, or by natural decay.

"[But] that which is a remedy for the others is an incentive to avarice." (S. Aug.)

1. *Success in his undertakings does not satisfy the avaricious man*

The more he has, the more he desires to have, and he is never content.

"Hell and destruction are never filled: so the eyes of men are never satisfied." (Prov. xxvii, 20)

"The covetous man resembles hell: however much hell swallows up, it desires and covets more. In like manner the avaricious man is never satisfied." (S. Aug.)

"The wholly avaricious man is infected with dropsy in the heart: the more he has, the more he desires. O avarice! O dropsy! O

ravenous hunger! O pestilence more cruel than a demon!" (S. Aug.)

"The eye of the covetous man is insatiable; . . . he will never be satisfied till he consumes his own soul, drying it up." (Eccli. xiv, 9)

"He never saith: It is enough. . . . Bring, bring." (Prov. xxx, 15)

Achab had no rest until he seized the vineyard of Naboth (3 Kings xxi).

"The avarice of the rich is insatiable; it is always grasping, and is never satisfied; it neither fears God nor respects man." (S. Aug.)

2. *The reverses of life do not correct the avaricious, but generally produce the opposite effect*

The more the avaricious man loses, the more trouble he takes to repair his losses, going so far as to refuse to himself and his family things that are necessary.

"The desire of money is the root of all evils." (1 Tim. vi, 10)

"The results of riches are luxury, excessive anger, violent rage, haughty pride, and every irrational emotion." (S. Chrys.)

In order to root out avarice it would be necessary first to destroy all the vices to which it gives rise.

"Avarice commands hard things, labor, dangers, sadness, and sorrow." (S. Aug.)

"We should shun riches. Those who have them do not seek them without toil, do not find them without difficulty, do not preserve them without anxiety, do not possess them without a guilty pleasure, do not lose them without grief." (S. Prosper)

3. *Infirmities and natural decay have still less effect in correcting this vice*

Experience proves this.

"When a man grows feeble, all his [other] vices grow feeble with him; avarice alone does not grow feeble." (S. Aug.)

The long-contracted habit of his sin has blinded him. Forced to do so by approaching death, he sends for a lawyer: "I leave." Alas! unfortunate sinner, you leave that which you cannot take with you. You leave the accursed fruit of your sins. Your sins you will carry with you. You leave. . . . Alas! you leave your money to your heirs . . . your body to the earth . . . your soul to the devil.

"The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi, 22)

"He that gathereth together by wronging his own soul, gathereth

for others, and another will squander away his goods in rioting." (Eccli. xiv, 4)

"Where are those that hoard up gold and silver, wherein men trust? . . . They are gone down to hell, and others are risen up in their place." (Baruch iii, 18, 19)

"The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take nothing away with him; he shall open his eyes and find nothing. Poverty like water shall hold on him, a tempest shall oppress him in the night." (Job xxvii, 19, 20)

"Riches shall not profit in the day of revenge." (Prov. xi, 4)

"Neither shall their silver and their gold be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord." (Soph. i, 18)

"O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to the man that hath peace in his possessions." (Eccli. xli, 1)

"Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own! How long also doth he load himself with thick clay? Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee; and they be stirred up that shall tear thee, and thou shalt be a spoil to them? (Hab. ii, 6, 7)

"Woe to him that gathereth together an evil covetousness to his house." (*Ibid.*, 9)

"The covetous shall not possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi, 10)

"Look at the rich man during life: you see what he has here, consider what he takes with him. What does he take with him? He has much gold, much silver, a great property; he dies; those things are sold I know not to whom." (S. Aug.)

"Let your manners be without covetousness, content with such things as you have." (Hebr. xiii, 5)

"We brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out." (1 Tim. vi, 7)

"Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth; where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal." (Matth. vi, 19)

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

Divisions

I

The avaricious man is

1. Impious towards God, 2. hard and unjust towards his neighbor, 3. cruel towards himself.

1. *Impious towards God*

1°. He lives in forgetfulness of God, he despises the Source of all riches, he prefers his wealth to God.

2°. He is ungrateful to God; far from thanking Him for the goods he has received from His bountiful hand, he attributes them to himself . . . he distrusts Divine Providence.

2. *Hard and unjust towards his neighbor*

1°. The avaricious man has no charity for his neighbor;

2°. He even violates the laws of justice in his dealings with others.

3. *Cruel towards himself*

The wealth of the rich man serves only to make him unhappy,

1°. In this world, by the desire of amassing and the fear of losing, he lives in misery in the midst of his abundance.

2°. In eternity: "The covetous person hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v, 5)

II

Means of curing oneself of avarice:

Seriously reflect on these truths:

1. "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." (Job i, 21)

2. I am hoarding up riches to leave behind me; but for whom? and why?

3. I love money so much that the more I have, the more I gather together; but am I the happier for it?

4. When we wish to quench a great fire, we throw a good deal of water on it; an excellent means of extinguishing avarice is to give all at once a large sum of money to the poor: "Alms resists sins" (Eccli. iii, 23). "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

XCII

ENVY

"Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matth. ix, 4)

There is nothing which the wicked do not find fault with and condemn, no matter how perfect and holy it may be. By their malicious envy they tarnish the most beautiful virtues and pour out on the most meritorious actions the poison of their slander or rash judgments. I. There is nothing more detestable than the sin of envy; and yet there is nothing more common in the world; II. There is nothing more dangerous to salvation; and yet there is nothing which people take less trouble in correcting.

I. THERE IS NOTHING MORE DETESTABLE THAN THE SIN OF ENVY

"Envy is sadness at the welfare of others." (S. Thos.) To be afflicted because our brethren are happy, to feel joy in their disgrace. . . .

"Envy is tormented at another's welfare, and is delighted at his misfortune." (S. Aug.)

That is what is called envy, a vice that is most hateful, that includes at the same time, (1) meanness, (2) cruelty, (3) treachery.

1. *There is such cowardice in envy that those who are guilty of this vice, pretend to be free from it*

"Anger indeed killeth the foolish, and envy slayeth the little one." (Job v, 2)

In fact, those whom this sin kills, are indeed small, since they themselves testify that they are lower than the object of their jealousy. Why can you not endure this neighbor? Because he manages his business better than you.

"The eye of the envious is wicked; and he turneth away his face, and despiseth his own soul." (Eccli. xiv, 8)

"The eye of the devil . . . the first invention of the devil." (S. Chrys.)

"By the envy of the devil death came into the world; and they follow him that are of his side." (Wis. ii, 24, 25)

"A man envies either his equals because they are equal to him; or his inferiors lest they may become equal to him; or his superiors because he is not equal to them." (S. Aug.)

"He who is tormented by envy is very petty; because if he were not mean, he would not grieve at the prosperity of another." (S. Greg.)

"Hence by envy the devil in the very beginning of the world ruined the first man and destroyed all mankind." (S. Prosper)

"It is said that the basilisk, the worst and most detestable of all animals, carries poison in its eyes. Do you wish to know a poisonous eye, a wicked eye, a fascinating eye? Reflect on envy." (S. Bern.)

"When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice; lest the Lord see, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him." (Prov. xxiv, 17, 18)

"Eat not with an envious man." (Prov. xxiii, 6)

2. There is nothing more cruel than envy

What was it that excited the sons of Jacob against their brother, Joseph? Envy.

"This matter of his dreams and words ministered nourishment to their envy and hatred." (Gen. xxxvii, 8)

"They that held darts envied him." (Gen. xlix, 23)

As men we should have feelings of humanity, and an envious man has none; as Christians we should have charity, and an envious man is not charitable; as members of the same body we should be united, but the envious man destroys all union.

"Charity envieth not." (1 Cor. xiii, 4)

"If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii, 26)

"Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep; being of one mind one towards another." (Rom. xii, 15, 16)

But while there is union everywhere else, even among animals: "[envious] men cannot spare their own kind." (Cassiod.)

"Satan envies, not other devils, but men; you, man though you are, envy men, and bear hatred against your own race and common nature,—a thing not done even by satan." (S. Chrys.)

"Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" (Matth. xx, 15)

"The envious man is incited by flattery, is puffed up by obsequiousness, is irritated by gifts, because he desires only the ruin or death of him whom he envies." (Cassian)

"Envy is a dreadful evil, because it changes the chief motive of love into hatred." (S. Thos.)

"A monstrous vice with a wonderful resemblance to the demons." (S. Aug.)

3. *Envy produces treachery, deceit, treason*

Hence those pretended reconciliations with enemies who are feared, in order that their secrets may be known and they themselves ruined. Thus Saul became reconciled to David.

Hence those malicious reports of words and acts to which is given an evil meaning that poisons them. Thus the ministers of Darius induced that prince to cast Daniel into the lions' den. (Dan. vi)

Hence also those constrained salutations, those forced acts of civility, those sins of backbiting and calumny.

"Detraction springs from envy." (S. Greg.)

"Envy is the root of all evils, the fountain of wrongs, the nursery-garden of all crimes." (S. Cypr.)

"Why do you extinguish all peace and charity by the blindness of envy?" (S. Cypr.)

Envy is a plague that has spread on all sides and corrupts everything. There is nothing more dangerous than envy, and yet there is nothing more common. It is found in all places and in every condition of life. It is envy that disturbs the peace of married people, that sows disunion in families, and divides brethren. Even children are not exempt from it; fathers and mothers should guard against it.

"Who is there that does not envy a fellow-citizen? Who is there that shows perfect charity towards his neighbor? All are separated from one another not by distance, but in affection; although they are united under one roof, yet they are separated in disposition. Are there any as closely united in affection as in blood? In whom does not the spiteful jealousy of ill-will burn? Where is the man whose heart has not been invaded by envy? Who is there that is not grieved at the prosperity of another? Who is it that does not believe the good fortune of another to be an injury to himself? What man is so content with his own happiness, that he wishes others also to be happy?" (Salvian)

"Christ commanded us to keep envy from us. But we, on the other hand, envy not only strangers, but even our neighbors; we cover with the poison of envy not only our enemies, but even our friends. So great a power has this vice over the hearts of all. The pleasure of eating has an end, the pleasure of detracting has no end." (Salvian)

"Envy affects many people, even the best." (S. Greg. Naz.)

II. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOTHING MORE DANGEROUS THAN ENVY, IT IS VERY RARE TO FIND PEOPLE WHO STRIVE TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THIS FAULT

In order that a sinner may be converted, he must know his sin, he must cease committing it, and humbly accuse himself of it. But the envious man is (1) a blind man who does not recognize his sin, (2) a hardened man who does not wish to give it up, (3) a proud man who is unwilling to confess it.

1. *The envious man does not see his sin*

Every sin darkens the understanding; but there is no sin that forms denser clouds than envy. An envious man persuades himself that his sin is nothing, or, at least, that it is only a very small matter. This is why the wise man says:

"Neither will I go with consuming envy; for such a man shall not be partaker of wisdom." (Wis. vi, 25)

The envious man looks on his passion as a pardonable weakness; he does not remember that it was the vice of Cain, of whom he becomes an imitator.

"Cain, blinded by the passion of jealousy, doomed his soul to the punishment of everlasting death."

"Wherefore did he kill him [his brother]? Because his own works were wicked, and his brother's just." (1 John iii, 12)

"Envious man, what are you longing for? Your own misfortune, or the prosperity of another." (S. Basil)

"I would almost say that he whom envy once corrupts by the deadly plague of its poison, has no remedy . . . For envy is inflamed by those very remedies that extinguish other vices." (Cassian)

2. *The envious man is so hardened that he does not wish to give up his sin; he loves evil for its own sake*

"He lives on the misfortunes of others." (S. Basil)

His sin, being one of pure malice, drags him into a series of faults that remove him farther and farther from his God, and consequently always increase the difficulty of his conversion. Mary, the sister of Moses, could not endure the honor given to her brother; she said:

"Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? . . . And being angry with them He [the Lord] went away . . . And behold Mary appeared white as snow with a leprosy." (Num. xii, 2, 9, 10). Leprosy: for "envy is the rottenness of the bones." (Prov. xiv, 30)

Envy corrupts all the powers of the soul.

"Envy injures itself in the first place; it bites him who first feels it, it hurts the mind, feeds on the heart like a plague, consumes the reason." (S. Isid.)

The envy of the Pharisees: they did not cease calumniating and persecuting the Saviour . . . Even Pilate exposed the malice that urged them on.

"For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him." (Matth. xxvii, 18)

"He that rejoiceth at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished." (Prov. xvii, 5)

"The envious man has as many torturers as the envied man has flatterers." (S. Prosper)

"There is nothing more just than envy, which continually torments and destroys him who cherishes it." (S. Prosper)

"O envy! who are always your own enemy; for the envious man certainly dishonors himself, and confers honor on him whom he envies." (S. Chrys.)

"Envious man, I pray you tell me, what pleasure does envy give you? You whom malice tears in pieces with certain secret talons, and tortures by the sight of another's happiness." (S. Jerome)

3. *He is a proud man who does not wish to humble himself nor to confess his sin*

Where are the penitents who accuse themselves of the sin of envy? And if they will not accuse themselves of it, how can they receive pardon?

"The wound that is shown to the physician is more easily cured. The wounds caused by envy are deep and hidden; and those who, in blind grief, shut themselves up in the hiding-places of their conscience, do not admit the cure of the physician." (S. Cypr.)

"The envious man, being asked to make known his disease, is absolutely afraid to accuse himself, and retains deep within his heart the malady that is gnawing and consuming him." (S. Basil). What happens?

"Is there any limit to crime, and do not men quit this life before they abandon their sins? For what envious man does not die in his iniquities, and is buried with them and in his crimes?" (Salvian)

"The wicked shall see and shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away; the desire of the wicked shall perish." (Ps. cxi, 10)

"The envious man cannot avoid being proud, for envy is the daughter of pride. Great is the man who conquers pride by humility." (S. Aug.)

"The envious are friends of the devil, enemies of themselves, and hateful to all." (S. Prosper)

The envious will recognize, but only when too late, that they have become the victims of their own malice.

"We are consumed in our wickedness." (Wis. v, 13)

"Be not emulous of evil doers, nor envy them that work iniquity." (Ps. xxxvi, 1)

"My joy is fulfilled. He must increase; but I must decrease." (John iii, 29, 30)

"Let us not be made desirous of vain-glory, envying one another." (Gal. v, 26)

"Be zealous for better gifts." (1 Cor. xii, 31)

Divisions

I

There is no passion more unjust than envy:

1°. because it is opposed to charity,

2°. because of the great evils it causes, both to the envious man and to society.

II

There is no passion more blind than envy.

Is it not, in fact, a great blindness to make oneself miserable because others are happy?

1°. The envious man is miserable in this world, because he is punished by his own sin; his passion alone is his punishment.

2°. He is preparing for an unhappy eternity in the other world.

XCIII

ANGER

"Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment." (Matth. v, 22)

You are not only forbidden to kill, says Christ, but you must not even be angry with your brother.

Nevertheless the sin of anger is very common in the world. To inspire you with all the horror of it which it deserves, we shall consider: I. How deserving of censure it is in its cause; II. How pernicious it is in its effects.

I. ANGER DESERVING OF CENSURE IN ITS CAUSE

Anger is an emotion which impels us to resent what displeases us.

"Anger is an eager desire of revenge; but the desire may be lawful or unlawful." (S. Thos.)

There is an anger which is just and reasonable.

"Be ye angry and sin not." (Ps. iv, 5)

Such was the anger of Phinees, who "went in after the Israelite into the brothel-house, and thrust both of them through together, to wit, the man and the woman." (Num. xxv, 8)

Such was the anger of Moses against the Israelites who adored the golden calf (Exod. xxxii).

Such was that of David against sinners:

"In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land." (Ps. c, 8)

Such was the anger of Jesus Christ Himself:

"When He had made as it were a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple . . . and the money of the changers He poured out and the tables He overthrew. And His disciples remembered that it was written: The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." (John ii, 15, 17)

"He who is angry with the sin of his brother is not angry with his brother. He, therefore, who is angry, not at his brother's sin, but with his brother, is angry without cause." (S. Aug.)

"It is better even not to open the door of the heart to just anger

demanding admission; for if once admitted, it is not easily driven out." (S. Aug.)

If your anger was of this kind you would deserve nothing but praise. But let us see what are the causes of your anger. It arises (1) either from an inordinate love of self, or (2) from a too great attachment to worldly goods, or (3) from want of submission to the Will of God.

1. *Anger arises from an inordinate love of self*

Man is full of self-love; he is unwilling to suffer anything that thwarts his inclinations or wounds his self-esteem. The least thing that troubles his repose, or that opposes him, makes him impatient and irritable. It is self-love that gives rise to these fits of bad temper and vexation,—it is pride. Such was the cause of Aman's anger against Mordochai, who would not bend the knee before him. (Esther iii, 6)

"Be not quickly angry . . . Remove anger from thy heart." (Eccle. vii, 10 and xi, 10)

"The proud and the arrogant is called ignorant, who in anger worketh pride." (Prov. xxi, 24)

"Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain-glory; but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves. Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philip, ii, 3–5)

"Anger is the restless desire to remove those things that impede facility of action. Therefore we are very often angry not only with men, but even with a pen when writing, and we throw it down." (S. Aug.)

2. *From a too great attachment to worldly goods*

How often do you not give way to outbursts of passionate anger because of some loss you have met with, of some injury you have suffered? But have your anger and the imprecations that follow from it ever removed the evils of which you complain? Have they served any other purpose than to make you guilty before God, and perhaps to cause you much annoyance?

3. *From want of submission to the will of God*

"Man . . . is filled with many miseries." (Job xiv, 1)

God permits it in order to detach us from the world. He afflicts us by reverses of fortune:

"That the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which

is tried by fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i, 7)

The man who is angry and impatient in his troubles, far from submitting to the Will of God, would wish that the Divine Will should conform to his own. Hence impatience and murmuring against Divine Providence in sickness, difficulties, misfortunes, losses, and disgrace.

"Always desire and pray that the Will of God may be wholly fulfilled in you. Behold, the man that does these things enters within the borders of peace and rest." (*Imit.*, B. iii, c. 23)

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: . . . blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21)

"I was troubled, and I spoke not." (Ps. lxxvi, 5)

"As a man I was disturbed, as a Christian I was silent." (S. Jerome)

"I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things." (Ps. xxxviii, 3)

"She [S. Monica] had learned not to resist an angry husband, neither in act nor even in word." (S. Aug.)

"Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii, 21)

II. ANGER PERNICIOUS IN ITS EFFECTS

What springs from a bad source cannot be otherwise than pernicious in its effects. Such is anger. It makes man, (1) his own enemy, (2) his neighbor's enemy, (3) God's enemy.

1. *Anger makes man his own enemy by the evils it causes to both body and soul*

"Envy and anger shorten a man's days." (Eccli. xxx, 26)

"Anger indeed killeth the foolish." (Job v, 2)

How many sudden deaths are caused by paroxysms of anger!

But what sad effects it produces especially in the soul! The characteristic of anger is to disturb the reason of him over whom it holds sway, to rob him of the peace and tranquillity of soul without which he cannot enjoy true happiness in this life.

What can be more opposed to reason than anger? An angry man no longer sees what he is doing, no longer knows what he is saying. Look at a man agitated by anger:—his body is trembling, his face is livid and altered, his eyes are blazing, his looks threatening. Is he still a man? What can be more void of reason? And he often gets angry at very trivial things, at the thoughtlessness of a child, at the

slowness of a servant, because some article of furniture is not in its place. Is it to be wondered at that a man of this character does not enjoy any peace? His soul is like a hell, in which there is no order, nothing but ceaseless agitation; he becomes his own punishment, his own enemy.

"Be not quickly angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool." (Eccle. vii, 10)

"The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest." (Is. lvii, 20)

"A man wise in his words shall make himself beloved." (Eccli. xx, 13)

"[But] a fool immediately sheweth his anger." (Prov. xii, 16)

"Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women." (Job ii, 10)

"Be not as a lion in thy house." (Eccli. iv, 35)

"If anger is violent beyond measure, it injuriously affects the judgment, it blunts the affections, it alters the language, it blinds the eyes, and disturbs the whole body." (S. Ambr.)

"The anger of man is vexatious, and is not without torture of the mind." (S. Aug.)

"Prudence is destroyed by anger, so that a man does not know what he is doing or why he does it." (S. Greg.)

"Pride deprives me of God, envy robs me of my neighbor, and anger robs me of myself." (Hugh of S. Victor)

2. Anger makes man the enemy of his neighbor

He is insupportable to himself, he cannot but be the same to others. All of us have these faults, we have need of help.

"Bear ye one another's burdens." (Gal. vi, 2)

But an angry man cannot bear anything. Is he offended? He becomes inflamed with passion, he vomits out reproaches and curses and renders himself unbearable.

What is the ordinary cause of the quarrels, lawsuits, domestic discord, that disturb society? Is it not anger? Does not this passion even incite to murder?

"Their feet are swift to shed blood." (Ps. xiii, 3)

"A passionate man stirreth up strifes; he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up." (Prov. xv, 18)

"A spirit that is easily angered, who can bear?" (Prov. xviii, 14)

"It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a quarrelsome and passionate woman." (Prov. xxi, 19)

"Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man; lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and take scandal to thy soul." (Prov. xxii, 24, 25)

"A mild answer breaketh wrath; but a harsh word stirreth up fury." (Prov. xv, 1)

"He that provoketh wrath, bringeth forth strife." (Prov. xxx, 33)

"A passionate man kindleth strife." (Eccli. xxviii, 11)

"We do not at first hate those with whom we are angry; but if this anger continues and is not quickly rooted out, it increases and becomes hatred." (S. Aug.)

"We should dwell with a wild beast rather than with an angry man. For anger leads a man into the rage of wild beasts, and makes him more furious than a dragon." (S. Chrys.)

"Vehement anger produces sad consequences in a short time." (S. Chrys.)

"The first weapons of anger are always accursed; and whenever we weak-minded people cannot do a thing, we choose to be angry; and so in every movement of impatient minds we use bad wishes for arms." (Salvian)

"Contemplate the foundations of the noblest cities; anger has uprooted them. Think of the desert solitudes without an inhabitant; anger has depopulated them. See houses consumed by conflagrations, fountains ruined by poison, families extinct; anger has perpetrated all these crimes." (Bona, *Manud. ad Coelum.*)

"The angry man gnashes his teeth, disturbs his relatives, creates divisions among his neighbors, strikes down with a clenched hand, is carried away by vexation, and injures those who yield to him: what greater madness! what more violent fury!" (S. Pet. Chrys.)

3. *Anger makes man the enemy of God*

Can we be astonished at this, since there is nothing more opposed to the Spirit of God than anger? The Spirit of God is a Spirit of peace and kindness.

"His place is in peace." (Ps. lxxv, 3)

"The Lord is not in the earthquake." (3 Kings xix, 11)

Jesus Christ came into this world to establish peace; He taught it to us both by word and example.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matth. xi, 29)

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matth. v, 9)

But can we recognize the Spirit of God in an angry man? Is it not rather the spirit of the devil?

"Let not the sun go down upon your anger. Give not place to the devil." (Eph. iv, 26, 27)

The moment the demon takes possession of a soul, it ceases to be the dwelling-place of God.

"Thou destroyest thy soul in thy fury." (Job xviii, 4)

"Let not the sun go down upon your anger. Let your anger be brief and let it not last until to-morrow. What will those do on the day of judgment upon whose anger the sun, not of one day, but of many years, has gone down as a witness?" (S. Jerome)

"Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God?" (Eccli. xxviii, 3)

"He that is easily stirred up to wrath, shall be more prone to sin." (Prov. xxix, 22)

"Anger and fury are both of them abominable." (Eccli. xxvii, 33)

"What is it that can be cured by anger, if it is not cured by the patience of God?" (S. Aug.)

"Anger is the door of all vices. When this door is closed, virtues have repose in the heart; but when it is open, the mind is ready for every crime." (S. Jerome)

"I do not know who may possess the kingdom of God, since he who is angry is excluded from that kingdom." (S. Jerome)

"This is the nature of anger, that, when put aside, it languishes and dies out, when given expression to, it becomes more and more inflamed." (Bede)

"Patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise." (Hebr. x, 36)

"The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace." (Ps. xxxvi, 11)

"Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbor." (Eccli. xxviii, 8)

"In your patience you shall possess your souls." (Luke xxi, 19)

"Shewing all mildness towards all men." (Tit. iii, 2)

"I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity; careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv, 1–3)

Divisions

I

1. *Effects of anger.*

1°. The angry man is his own enemy;
2°. He is his neighbor's enemy;

3°. He is the enemy of God.

2. Remedies against anger.

1°. Humility: "With all humility";
2°. Mildness: "With mildness";
3°. Patience: "With patience supporting one another in charity." (Eph. iv, 2)

II

"Peace be to you!" What is more opposed to this peace than anger?

1. It destroys the peace that should exist between God and the soul.
1°. Because it is totally opposed to the Spirit of God.
You can convince yourself of this,
a) By God's manner of acting;
b) By the teaching of Jesus Christ;
c) By the example of His most faithful servants.
2°. Because it often causes man to defy the majesty of God. "Other vices fly from God," said a holy Father, "but anger stretches out its hand against Him" (Job xv, 25). Blasphemy, cursing, are the result of anger.

2. It destroys peace with our neighbor.
The angry man daily violates,
1°. The most sacred laws of flesh and blood;
2°. The laws of Christian charity, which are not less deserving of respect.

3. It destroys the peace which we should preserve in our own hearts.

III

Faults which anger causes us to commit against ourselves:
1°. It goes so far as to impede the use of reason;
2°. It causes paroxysms of frenzy, which reason condemns;
3°. It impairs the perfection of reason by removing all the virtues that could serve to adorn it.

XCIV

GLUTTONY

INTEMPERANCE, DRUNKENNESS

"Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." (Luke xxi, 34)

The sensual, the intemperate, abuse the gifts which God has given to man for his support; they make use of these goods only to offend God by the monstrous excesses to which they abandon themselves. Let us strive to open their eyes to their crime and misery by showing them how much opposed this vice is to reason and religion. I. The intemperate man is a man without reason; II. He is a man without religion.

I. THE INTEMPERATE MAN IS A MAN WITHOUT REASON

Intemperance consists in the immoderate use of those things that are necessary for the support of the body. This excess can be committed either in the quantity or quality of the food, or in the manner in which the food is taken. It is against excess in quantity, which is more directly opposed to right reason, that I would specially warn you.

Reason teaches us to avoid carefully everything that tends to impair (1) health, (2) fortune, (3) reason itself, which distinguishes us from the lower animals. But such is necessarily the fruit of drunkenness.

1. *Intemperance injures the health*

"In many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate, shall prolong life." (Eccli. xxxvii, 33, 34)

"They that give themselves to drinking, and that club together, shall be consumed." (Prov. xxiii, 21)

"The wine goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk." (Prov. xxiii, 31, 32)

"What is his life, who is diminished with wine?" (Eccli. xxxi, 33)

"Sober drinking is health to soul and body." (Eccli. xxxi, 37)

"How can the body that is filled with drink be healthy?" (S. Basil)

Without speaking of sudden deaths caused by drunkenness, let us see whence come most diseases.

"Gluttony kills more than the sword." (S. Aug.)

"Gluttony kills very many, temperance does not kill any one; numberless people have been injured by drunkenness, frugality has injured none; many have died while feasting and have covered the table with their own blood.'" (S. Ambr.)

2. *Intemperance ruins one's property*

It is not necessary to insist on a truth the proofs of which are before us every day. The drunkard neglects his work, allows himself to be imposed upon, spends his money foolishly. If only he himself suffered for his folly,—but his wife and his children also suffer because of it.

"He that loveth good cheer, shall be in want; he that loveth wine and fat things, shall not be rich." (Prov. xxi, 17)

"Those merciless murderers of their own children, and eaters of men's bowels, and devourers of blood." (Wis. xii, 5)

"A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich." (Eccli. xix, 1)

"Wine drunken with excess raiseth quarrels, and wrath, and many ruins." (Eccli. xxxi, 38)

"When under the influence of drink men destroy the effect of all their good deeds." (S. Greg.)

"In one day they drink the labor of many days." (S. Ambr.)

3. *Intemperance impairs reason*

Reason says to us: You must eat to live and not live to eat; but the intemperate, the drunkards, live only to eat and drink; they know no moderation, no limit; they eat and drink until they can no longer bear the quantity of food and drink which they have taken. Drunkenness comes on; where is their reason? Examine a drunkard in all his bearing. Is he still a man? Follow him into his house; what a spectacle is there presented!

"Man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. xlviii, 13)

"For what beast is as offensive both to the sight and the hearing as the drunkard?" (S. Basil)

"What is a drunkard but an unnecessary creature?" (S. Ambr.)

"There is no secret where drunkenness reigneth." (Prov. xxxi, 4)

"The drunkard disturbs nature, loses grace, destroys glory, and finds eternal damnation." (S. Aug.)

"There is nothing more pernicious, nothing more shameful, than gluttony; it makes the intellect dull and stupid, it renders the mind carnal, it blinds the understanding, and does not permit it to examine anything. When drunkenness rules, reason is banished, the understanding is impaired, advice is unheeded, and the judgment is destroyed." (S. Chrys.)

"Be not in the feasts of great drinkers, nor in their revellings, who contribute flesh to eat." (Prov. xxiii, 20)

"Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness." (Is. v, 22)

Woe to those who deliver themselves up to these excesses! But woe also to those who furnish drunkards with drink, who entertain them at unseasonable hours!

"If you make yourself and another drunk, you make man your friend, but God your enemy." (S. Aug.)

"You ask friends to share your pleasures, you drive them to death; you invite them to dinner, and you wish to carry them to the grave; you promise food, and you give that which tortures; you place wines before them, and you pour out poison." (S. Ambr.)

"What is more unhappy than to be under the tyranny of drunkenness? To load the stomach beyond its capacity, to deprive the understanding of reason, to be unable to speak, to think, to stand, and in a sense, to impose death on unimpaired nature." (S. Hilary)

"The drunkard is unfit for any business. What is more disgraceful than a drunkard? He is an object of ridicule to his servants, a laughing-stock to his enemies, miserable with his friends, he deserves the detestation of all." (S. Chrys.)

"These men, as irrational beasts, shall perish in their corruption, receiving the reward of their injustice." (2 Pet. ii, 12)

"Drunkards are to be considered as worse than brute beasts." (S. Aug.)

II. THE DRUNKARD IS A MAN WITHOUT RELIGION

"The intemperate man, the drunkard, is a man devoid of religion; because no matter how we look at his predominant vice, it is opposed to the spirit of Christianity.

1. This sin deprives a man of the grace of God; 2. it destroys the Christian virtues and is the source of many sins; 3. it places the soul in grave danger, on account of the difficulty of breaking it off.

1. *Intemperance deprives man of the grace of God*

Can a sin that is mortal in its nature and the source of many other sins, co-exist with divine grace? But such is the sin of gluttony. Is it not this sin that ruined our first parents? The Israelites, weary of the manna, desired to eat flesh.

"As yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them." (Ps. lxxvii, 30)

"This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions, he giveth himself to revelling, and to debauchery and banquetings. The people of the city shall stone him; and he shall die." (Deut. xxi, 20, 21)

"In the days of Noë they did eat and drink, until the day that he entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke xvii, 27)

"Baltassar, the king, made a great feast for his nobles . . . And every one drank . . . In the same hour there appeared fingers, as it were the hand of a man writing." (Dan. v, i, 5)

But how much more terrible are the chastisements which God reserves for the intemperate in the other life!

"Drunkenness, revellings . . . they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." (Gal. v, 21)

"Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke xvi, 24)

"Who hath woe? whose father hath woe? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups." (Prov. xxiii, 29, 30)

"Very many take pride in being able to drink much without getting drunk: let these listen to the Prophet speaking against them: 'Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine.'" (S. Isid.)

"Woe means destruction." (S. Jerome)

"Wine and women make wise men fall off." (Eccli. xix, 2)

"Woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening." (Is. v, 11)

"[Who say:] Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." (Is. xxii, 13)

"As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii, 7)

2. *Intemperance is the source of many other sins*

It destroys the Christian virtues; it brings in its train impiety, irreligion, injustice, impurity, and innumerable other crimes.

"This was the iniquity of Sodom, . . . fulness of bread." (Ezech. xvi, 49)

The intemperate man sins against God:

His God is his belly. (Phil. iii, 19)

He neglects his religious duties, prayer, the Sacraments, the Sunday worship, the word of God, . . . what blasphemies, what impious discourses come forth from his lips when he is drunk . . .

"They that are such serve not Christ, our Lord, but their own belly." (Rom. xvi, 18)

He sins against his neighbor: injuries, quarrels, murders, injustices, thefts to provide for his expenses.

He sins against himself: shameful thoughts, impure desires, licentious conversations, lewd actions.

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury." (Ephes. v, 18)

"I believe that the drunkard is never chaste." (S. Jerome)

But if intemperance is the source of so many sins, should we be astonished that it is the ruin of virtue, of the love of God, of charity towards the neighbor, of humility, modesty, purity? And how much these excesses are opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of penance and mortification!

"Wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous." (Prov. xx, 1)

"They were made full; and they lifted up their heart, and have forgotten Me." (Os. xiii, 6)

"The beloved grew fat and kicked; he grew fat, and thick, and gross, he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his Saviour." (Deut. xxxii, 15)

"The eating of meat, and the drinking of wine, and the satiety of the stomach, is the nursery of lust." (S. Jerome)

"These are the first weapons employed by the demon against youth, namely, wine and luxury." (S. Jerome)

"From the gluttony of the stomach are propagated senseless joy, scurrility, uncleanness, babbling, and dulness of the understanding." (S. Greg.)

"Gluttony leads a numberless army of vices to fight against the soul. When the vice of intemperance is cut off, many vices are destroyed at the same time." (*Id.*)

"The just eateth and filleth his soul; but the belly of the wicked is never to be filled." (Prov. xiii, 25)

"Drunkards seem to despise God in their drunkenness." (Salvian)

3. *Intemperance places the soul in grave danger*

That which above all should make drunkards and the intemperate

tremble, is that this vice exposes their salvation to very great danger, not only on account of the sins that follow from it, but also because of the difficulty of freeing oneself from it. Do we see many who free themselves from the vice of drunkenness? The enormity of this vice and its sad effects do not touch them. They remain away from the Sacraments or receive them without a true purpose of amendment. They carry their fatal habit with them into old age, and sometimes even to the grave.

"They have been ignorant through wine, and through drunkenness have erred." (Is. xxviii, 7)

"Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." (Luke vi, 25)

"Use as a frugal man the things that are set before thee, lest if thou eatest much thou be hated." (Eccli. xxxi, 19)

"I thought in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom, and might avoid folly." (Eccle. ii, 3)

"Awake, ye that are drunk, and weep, and mourn all ye that take delight in drinking sweet wine; for it is cut off from your mouth." (Joel i, 5)

"Let the just feast, and rejoice before God; and be delighted with gladness." (Ps. lxvii, 4)

"Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x, 31)

"Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness." (Rom. xiii, 13)

Divisions

1. *Everything condemns the drunkard.*

What renders him infamous and criminal is:

1°. He injures his health;

2°. He loses his good name;

3°. He risks his salvation.

2. *The excuses given by the drunkard do not justify him.*

1°. He gives as an excuse the meeting with a relative or a friend;

2°. It is a relaxation, he says, that is allowed to poor men who have worked hard all week;

3°. It is a vice of youth, some say, a habit contracted long since, which cannot be broken off;

4°. Men have business to transact, it is said, and it is customary to drink together at such times. Refutation of these excuses.

XCV

SLOTH

"Why stand you here all the day idle?" (Matth. xx, 6)

It is not the violent passions alone that are to be feared. Sloth, languishing as it is, is to be dreaded infinitely more; it corrupts more hearts than all other passions together, and this for two very remarkable reasons: people do not fear sloth, and they do not recognize it. Nevertheless, I. It is very dangerous to be slothful; II. Whatever a man may do, he is idle if he is not occupied in the work of his salvation.

I. IT IS VERY DANGEROUS TO BE SLOTHFUL

Sloth is an act of cowardice, an inordinate love of repose, which causes a man to neglect the duties of religion, or of his state of life, rather than do the least violence to himself. But sloth is very dangerous, for it closes the door to all that is good, and opens it to all that is evil. The heart of a slothful man is like a hell in which, as in the hell of the devils, are found all evils without any good.

1. *Sloth closes the door to all that is good*

Honor, wealth, science, virtue, are not acquired without labor; and to speak of virtue alone, the only really solid and desirable good, do you not know what labor, what efforts, what violence to oneself, it costs? It is established only on the ruin of the passions, and it is not easy to destroy these.

"For when cut off they sprout again." (S. Bern.)

It would be necessary to do violence to oneself.

The slothful man is incapable of generous efforts. Therefore, where sloth is, there are no virtues, no riches, no science, no honor.

"Desires have killed the slothful, for his hands have refused to work at all." (Prov. xxi, 25)

"The sluggard willeth and willeth not; but the soul of them that work shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii, 4)

"The slothful man saith: There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the midst of the streets." (Prov. xxii, 13)

"As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." (Prov. xxvi, 14)

"There is no virtue without labor, for labor is the progress of virtue." (S. Ambr.)

"Love is not idle; if it is great it works; but if it refuses to work it is not love." (S. Ambr.)

"The kingdom of Heaven does not come to the idle and the slumbering; eternal happiness is not given to those who are benumbed by idleness and sloth." (S. Prosp.)

"Be doing something, so that the devil may always find you occupied." (S. Jerome)

"Idleness is the blight of wisdom and genius." (*Id.*)

"Shun idleness; it is the mother of foolish things, the step-mother of virtues." (S. Bern.)

"Idleness is the off-scouring of all temptations and evil thoughts, the worst quality of the mind, the refuse of all evils, the death of the soul. The demon makes use of idleness as a door by which to pour the unlawful allurements of thoughts into even the purest minds." (*Id.*)

"As water which does not flow but lies in a pool, becomes putrid, so the body of the slothful man brings forth and nourishes the madness of carnal desires and pleasures." (*Id.*)

"An idle mind does not know how to think of anything but food and the stomach." (Cassian)

"Spiritual cowardice and sloth squander and destroy the whole treasure of virtue." (S. John Clim.)

2. It opens the door to all evils

As an uncultivated field produces a quantity of useless weeds, so the heart that is not cultivated is fruitful in bad desires and criminal thoughts.

"They [the slothful rich] are not in the labor of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men. Therefore pride hath held them fast; they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were, from fatness; they have passed into the affection of the heart. They have thought and spoken wickedness; they have spoken iniquity on high." (Ps. lxxii, 5–8)

Thus, idleness produces pride, vanity, ambition, injustice, impiety. The Israelites were not employed while Moses was absent. They went so far as to adore a golden calf.

"The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." (Exod. xxxii, 6)

Idleness was the source of the sin and misery of the inhabitants of Sodom.

"This was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters." (Ezech. xvi, 49)

Do not most of the crimes that are committed spring from idleness?

"Idleness hath taught much evil." (Eccli. xxxiii, 29)

An industrious man is tempted by the devil of sloth only; the idle man is tempted by all the devils at once.

"He whom battles do not subdue is tempted by idleness." (S. Ambr.)

"Idleness is the mother of all concupiscence, and impurity, and sin." (S. Jerome)

"Idleness is a part of wickedness, not indeed a mere part, but the cause and evil root, since it has taught all evil." (S. Chrys.)

"Sloth is as it were the mistress and origin of all evils." (*Id.*)

"Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways and learn wisdom: which although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep? Thou wilt sleep a little, thou wilt slumber a little . . . and want shall come upon thee as a traveller, and poverty as a man armed." (Prov. vi, 6–11)

"Blush, O Christian, since you are proved to be more foolish than beasts and ants." (S. Aug.)

"How we should hate idleness which makes man worse than the ant and the bee." (S. Basil)

"Because of the cold the sluggard would not plough; he shall beg therefore in the summer, and it shall not be given him." (Prov. xx, 4)

"I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man; and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall was broken down." (Prov. xxiv, 30, 31)

How contemptible is the sluggard!

"The sluggard is pelted with a dirty stone, and all men will speak of his disgrace. The sluggard is pelted with the dung of oxen; and every one that toucheth him will shake his hands." (Eccli. xxii, 1, 2)

"He that pursueth idleness is very foolish." (Prov. xii, 11)

"He that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty." (Prov. xxviii, 19)

"The slothful hand hath wrought poverty; but the hand of the industrious getteth riches." (Prov. x, 4)

"We are benumbed by sloth, and we indulge in vanity and buffoonery, as if the life of man on earth were peace and not warfare." (S. Bern.)

II. WHATEVER A MAN MAY DO, HE IS IDLE IF HE IS NOT ENGAGED IN THE WORK OF HIS SALVATION

That just man who does not mix in worldly affairs, appears to be idle; and yet he is very busy: he is working to save his soul.

"The idleness of the wise man is occupation." (S. Bern.)

Men of the world are very busy, they labor unceasingly, and yet they are idle, they do not think of their salvation; and not to think of that is to be idle. "They work but do nothing." This opinion is founded, (1) on authority, (2) on reason, (3) on their own admission.

1. *This opinion founded on authority*

"You walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling." (2 Thess. iii, 11)

"The trifling occupations of grown people are called business; but children who do such things are punished by their elders." (S. Aug.)

"Vanity of vanities . . . What hath a man more of all his labor?" (Eccle. i, 2, 3)

"He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings." (2 Cor. ix, 6)

"As idleness is an evil thing, so also is the work that is unsuitable; let us therefore strive to avoid both idleness and the work which is worse than idleness." (S. Chrys.)

"Among those things which the Lord hates is this, sluggish and indolent laziness, ceasing to do that which the duty of our state obliges us to do." (S. Basil)

"If you would be perfect avoid idleness, because there is nothing worse found in the servants of God." (S. Aug.)

"Not to do good is nothing else than to do evil." (S. Chrys.)

"Thou art spent with foolish labor." (Exod. xviii, 18)

"Why have the people devised vain things?" (Ps. ii, 1)

"They shall be considered as a spider." (Ps. lxxxix, 10)

"Their works are unprofitable works . . . Their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts." (Is. lix, 6, 7)

2. *On reason*

When a man neglects his business and does not fulfil the duties of his state, it is said that he does nothing. And yet he is so busy!

Yes, but he does not do what he should do. What is the great business of a Christian? It is that of saving his soul.

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary." (Luke x, 41)

If you neglect the affair of salvation you are idle; what you are doing is not what you should do.

"We entreat you, brethren, that you abound more; and that you use your endeavor to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you." (1 Thess. iv, 10, 11)

"It is absurd to engage in unprofitable occupation in order to avoid idleness. A man is idle when he does anything that does not help him in saving his soul." (Pet. Cell.)

Thus, how many years should be counted as lost! An innocent life, though short, is reputed long.

"A spotless life is old age." (Wis. iv, 9)

On the other hand, the longest life is short and empty if it is not passed in doing good works.

"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor. iii, 8)

"If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. iii, 10)

"Consider what iniquity deserves, if uselessness alone is sufficient to cause damnation." (S. Bern.)

"Man is born to labor and the bird to fly." (Job v, 7)

3. *On the admission of slothful persons*

Question a dying man. The judgment formed at the moment of death is sounder than that formed during life. What regrets will he not express for having employed his time badly, for not having occupied himself with the work of his salvation!

"Therefore we have erred in the way of truth. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known." (Wis. v, 6, 7)

"They have woven the webs of spiders . . . Their webs shall not be for clothing, nor shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are unprofitable works, and the work of iniquity is in their hands." (Is. lix, 5, 6)

"Man does not spend his time profitably in this world unless he so spends it as to gain merit for eternity." (S. Aug.)

"Decline from evil [but that is not enough] and do good." (Ps. xxxvi, 27)

"Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully [*i. e.*, negligently]. (Jer. xlviii, 10)

"Because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc. iii, 16)

"Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." (Eccli. xiv, 14)

"[Work] while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4)

"The time is short." (1 Cor. vii, 29)

"Therefore, while we have time, let us work good." (Gal. vi, 10)

"Every tree, therefore, that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." (Matth. iii, 10)

"Go you also into my vineyard . . . Call the laborers and pay them their hire." (Matth. xx, 4, 8)

"Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not . . . Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents." (Matth. xxv, 26, 28)

"In carefulness [be] not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord." (Rom. xii, 11)

"And you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory." (1 Pet. v, 4)

Divisions

I

1. *Bodily Sloth.*

Obligation of working imposed on man: "With labor and toil thou shalt eat," etc. (Gen. iii, 17). Even if we had not been expressly commanded to work, the advantages of labor and the dangers and results of idleness, would be motives sufficiently strong to induce us to undertake some serious and regular employment.

2. *Physical advantages of work.*

Reasonable work contributes to the health of the body . . . it gives relish to the innocent pleasures that follow it, it removes the occasion of a thousand superfluous expenses, it prevents want.

3. *Spiritual advantages.*

It removes temptations, and causes us to avoid a multitude of faults.

4. *Dangers of idleness.*

Idleness renders man incapable of fulfilling his duties to society

. . . It is the source of lying, . . . of sinful stories . . . of immorality . . . It causes people to neglect their religious duties.

II

1. *Spiritual Sloth.*

Its principal effects are: tepidity, cowardice, carelessness in the observance of the commandments and in the service of God, sometimes even a sort of despair; finally, enmity; the malice of the lazy against those who try to rouse them to work and do violence to their slothful inclinations: "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that speak sentences." (Prov. xxvi, 16)

2. *Remedies.*

1°. To think how short life is;

2°. To consider that the more a man neglects his duties the more difficulty he has in fulfilling them;

3°. Not to be influenced by the excuses which idleness suggests, but to obey promptly: "Here I am, for thou didst call me." (1 Kings, iii, 9)

4°. Frequently to recall to mind the evils produced by idleness.

XCVI

HUMILITY

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xviii, 14)

To be great in the eyes of men it is necessary to do great things, for men judge men only by the fame of their deeds. But God judges differently. A man is great before Him only in proportion as he humbles himself. Let us, then, embrace humility, that virtue so pleasing to God and so advantageous to men. Consider: I. The motives of humility; II. the practice of humility.

I. MOTIVES OF HUMILITY

Humility is a virtue which fills man with a low opinion of himself, makes him love humiliation, and suffer contempt with joy, or at least with patience. But there is nothing more proper and at the same time more beneficial for a man than to despise himself and suffer contempt.

1. *There is nothing more proper,* 1°. whether he considers what he is as a man, or 2°. what he is as a sinner; or 3°. as a Christian.

2. *There is nothing more beneficial* on account of the great advantages which accompany humility. Such are the motives—

1°. *Whether he considers what he is as a man*

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii, 5)

What is man during the course of his life? Subject to infirmities, his body subject to the corruption of the grave . . .

"Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." (Job xiv, 1)

"Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Eccli. x, 9)

Acknowledge with David that you are nothing in the presence of Almighty God:

"My substance is as nothing before Thee." (Ps. xxxviii, 6)

"But if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." (Ps. ciii, 29)

"If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. vi, 3)

"This is the whole science of man, to know that of himself he is nothing, and that whatever is from God is on account of God." (S. Aug.)

"I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi, 7)

"Great is the power of God alone, and He is honored by the humble." (Eccli. iii, 21)

2°. *As a sinner*

"Behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me." (Ps. l, 7)

We are born "children of wrath." We have been ransomed by the mercy of the Redeemer; but we are constantly exposed to the danger of again falling into disgrace with God, because of ignorance and concupiscence, the sad effects of the sin of our first parents. How many times have we not actually fallen? How many times have we not rendered ourselves deserving of the pains of hell! Ah! what pride can hold out against such a thought?

Man has of himself only sin and deceit.

"The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." (Eccli. iii, 20)

"Be first displeased with what you are, so that you may be what you are not." (S. Aug.)

3°. *As a Christian*

A Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ. But what is the great maxim of Christ?

"Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matth. xi, 29)

"If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all." (Mark ix, 34)

"Whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister." (Matth. xx, 26)

"Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matth. xviii, 3)

But the example of our loving Saviour, even more than His words, preaches to us this virtue of humility:

"He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." (Phil. ii, 7)

"He endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. xii, 2)

If Christ so humbled Himself, can we be His disciples when we seek glory and honor?

"The humility of Christ is the remedy for the pride of man." (S. Aug.)

"Be humble on account of yourself, because God was pleased to be humble for your sake, not for His own." (S. Aug.)

"The compendium of all Christian philosophy is this, that we should strive to imitate our Leader, Jesus Christ, by true humility." (Blos.)

II. ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY

What advantages does not humility procure for us? Advantages, 1°. in relation to God, 2°. in relation to ourselves, 3°. in relation to our neighbor. Thus we can say of humility as of wisdom:

"All good things come to me together with her." (Wis. vii, 8)

1°. *Advantages in relation to God,* by the abundant graces which He bestows on the humble.

"To the humble He giveth grace." (1 Pet. v, 5)

"Thou wilt save the humble people; but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud." (Ps. xvii, 28)

"He hath regarded the humility of His hand-maid." (Luke i, 48)

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold." (Eccli. xxxv, 21)

"Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation." (1 Pet. v, 6)

"Brethren, behold a great miracle: God is exalted; you exalt yourself, and He departs from you, you humble yourself, and He comes down to you." (S. Aug.)

"I know not how it is that the Divinity is accustomed to approach humility in a more familiar way. . . . He who is vile in his own eyes is dear to God." (S. Bern.)

2°. *Advantages on our own part.* Humility becomes in us a fruitful source of merit and virtues. Are we in sin? It obtains our pardon.

"This man [the publican] went down into his house justified." (Luke xviii, 14)

Are we in a state of grace? We have need of more grace to sustain us; and it is humility that will bring this grace down to us.

"It deserves to have graces given to it; it preserves those received, it makes use of those preserved." (S. Bern.)

Humility is the companion of all virtues; it strengthens and makes them perfect.

"Humility is the mother of wisdom. What then is the chief virtue? Humility certainly." (S. Jerome)

"The humble man builds on a rock; the proud builds on sand." (Rich. of S. Victor)

Let us, therefore, practise humility in all things. This should be so much easier to us, since we have in ourselves so many subjects of humiliation.

"Thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee." (Mich. vi, 14)

By the salutary confusion with which it fills us humility makes even our faults serve to our sanctification.

"Humility in evil deeds is more pleasing to God than pride in good acts." (S. Aug.)

"Where humility is, there also is wisdom." (Prov. xi, 2)

"Because they are humbled, I will not destroy them." (2 Paral. xii, 7)

"We cried to the Lord God of our fathers: who heard us and looked down upon our affliction." (Deut. xxvi, 7)

"You wish to be great, begin by being very little; you are thinking of erecting a large and lofty building, think first of the foundation of humility; and the weightier and more massive the building one wishes to erect, the more deeply does one dig the foundation." (S. Aug.)

"Humility is the mother of all virtues." (S. Chrys.)

"Humility is the most secure treasury of all virtues." (S. Basil)

"What is there more valuable or more precious than humility, by which the kingdom of Heaven is certainly purchased and divine grace acquired?" (S. Bern.)

3°. *Advantages on the part of our neighbor:* by the peace which it maintains, by the esteem and the honor that are rendered to the virtue of humility.

"Whence are wars and contentions among us? Are they not hence? from your concupiscences . . . you covet . . . you contend and war." (Jas. iv, 1, 2)

It matters little to the humble Christian whether he is esteemed or despised: he is always the same, he possesses his soul in peace.

"That is true humility by which one thinks little of oneself, and praises the good qualities of another without envy or jealousy." (S. Aug.)

"Human society is bound together and the divine clemency won, by humility." (S. Ambr.)

"By humbling himself for his faults, a man readily pacifies and soothes those that are vexed with him. The humble man remains in unshaken peace, even when shame comes upon him, because he leans on God and not on man." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 2)

"Always seek the lowest place, and to be beneath every one else. . . . Behold, the man that does these things enters within the borders of peace and rest." (*Imit.*, B. iii, c 23)

III. PRACTICE OF HUMILITY

Howsoever pressing may be the motives that urge us to practise humility, this virtue is rare. A holy Father says: "Few are chosen because few are humble." There are many who think they are humble; but most of them are content with an apparent humility.

"Many strive after the shadow of humility; few endeavour to grasp the reality." (S. Bern.)

They cease to be humble the moment they suffer any humiliation. Their humility then is really only a refinement of pride.

Humility should be sincere and solid. 1°. Sincere humility fills a man with a low opinion of himself; 2°. solid humility enables him to suffer contempt courageously.

1°. *Sincere humility* should be in the heart and spring from it.

"Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matth. xi, 29)

To have this humility, we must first know ourselves. Let us acknowledge before God all that passes in our hearts, what our faults are, how great is our misery, and the number of sins of which we have been guilty.

"Thou art miserable, and poor, and naked." (Apoc. iii, 17)

"Humility is a virtue by which any one, from a true knowledge of himself, becomes vile in his own eyes." (S. Bern.)

If you possess some virtues, compare them with the heroic actions of the saints, and you will discover great subjects of humiliation. You will not find much pleasure in the praise bestowed on you.

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy name give glory." (Ps. cxiii, 1)

If, in order to be truly humble, it would be sufficient to know what we are, or even to have a low opinion of ourselves, humility would not be so rare; but that is only the first degree of humility. We should force ourselves to be quite content that others should know us such as we are, without faults and imperfections,—provided, however, that we are not a subject of scandal to them.

"When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place." (Luke xiv, 8)

"If you ask: What holds the first place in the religion and teaching of Christ? I will answer: Humility holds the first place. What

holds the second? Humility. What the third? Humility." (S. Aug.)

2. *Humility should be solid,* so as to enable us to suffer with resignation the contempt of all.

"[But] humility is honored as a rare virtue." (S. Bern.)

Honors are often the fatal rock on which humility is wrecked.

"He who is truly great, neither feels nor says anything great of himself, but considers himself to be the last of all." (S. Chrys.)

Those who are not offended or irritated at the contempt of others, but bear it patiently, possess solid humility. Even that, however, is not the most perfect humility. What humility is most perfect, then? It is that which not only bears contempt with patience, but even loves it and looks for it.

"We glory in tribulations." (Rom. v, 3)

"I will glory of the things that concern my infirmity." (2 Cor. xi, 30)

"Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

"I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle." (1 Cor. xv, 9)

"We are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all even until now." (1 Cor. iv, 13)

"I please myself in reproaches, in persecutions for Christ." (2 Cor. xii, 10)

"They went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts v, 41)

Ah! how rare it is to find humble men of this character in our day! The greater number are offended and irritated at the slightest contempt.

Let us exercise ourselves unceasingly in the practice of humility, and let us earnestly beg this virtue from the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

"Do ye all insinuate humility one into another." (1 Pet. v, 5)

"Love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing." (*Imit.,* B. i, c. 2)

"I will be little in my own eyes." (2 Kings vi, 22)

"He will save the humble of spirit." (Ps. xxxiii, 19)

"Glory shall uphold the humble of spirit." (Prov. xxix, 23)

"Be humbled in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (Jas. iv, 10)

Divisions

I

1. *Humility is an absolutely necessary virtue.* The words of Christ are a sufficient proof of this:

"Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. xviii, 3)

The necessity of this virtue is further proved by the following considerations:

1°. It is humility that obtains the other virtues: "It deserves to have them given to it."

2°. It is humility that preserves them: "It preserves them when received." "[But] pride is a worm that gnaws at virtues." (S. Basil)

3°. It is humility alone that can make virtues perfect: "It perfects them when preserved." (S. Bern.)

2. To excite ourselves to the practice of humility, let us consider,

1°. The grandeur of God;

2°. The humiliation of Jesus Christ;

3°. Our own misery.

II

1. *Importance and necessity of humility.*

1°. It enables us to acquire the other virtues;

2°. To preserve them;

3°. To make them perfect;

4°. To receive the reward bestowed on them.

2. *Means of recognizing true humility and of distinguishing it from false*

1°. A respectful fear for all that comes to us from God;

2°. Knowledge of ourselves;

3°. Love of humiliation.

III

The character of the truly humble man:

1. He places himself above all the empty praises of flattery;

2. He bears with courage and tranquillity of soul the injuries and calumnies of which he may be the object;

3. He practises resignation and patience when the reproaches addressed to him are true and merited.

XCVII

MEEKNESS

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." (Matth. v, 4)

Just as anger disturbs the repose of the soul, so meekness preserves it in peace. In order to cure the vices that are the diseases of the soul, we must practise the opposite virtues. Anger is a fire that causes great damage to the soul; to this fire we must oppose meekness as a tempering dew. "Shall not the dew assuage the heat?" (Eccli. xviii, 6). Consider: I. What are the advantages of meekness? II. What is meant by the practice of this virtue?

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF MEEKNESS

We can say of meekness what Solomon says of wisdom: "Now all good things come to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands." (Wis. vii, 11)

Meekness procures for us, (1) the grace of God; (2) the friendship of our neighbor; (3) mastery over ourselves.

1. *Meekness procures for us the grace of God*

By meekness we possess the heart of God, as a child possesses that of his father.

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matth. v, 9)

"To the meek He will give grace." (Prov. iii, 34)

Meekness is a virtue that gives man a special character of resemblance to God. The most consoling idea which we can form of God is that of the goodness and kindness which He shows towards man. It is especially by these features of forbearance and goodness that He makes known His power.

"O God, who dost manifest Thy power especially by sparing and showing mercy." (Office of the Church.)

"Thou judgest with tranquillity and with great favor disposest of us." (Wis. xii, 18)

The man who feels kindly towards his brethren, who freely and fully pardons injuries, becomes like to God, as far as he can be so. It

can be said, therefore, that meekness is one of the most certain marks of predestination.

"He will guide the mild in judgment: He will teach the meek His ways." (Ps. xxiv, 9)

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." (Matth. v, 4)

"The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace." (Ps. xxxvi, 11)

What is this land? It is the blessed land of the living, where no one ever dies. Those who are found conformable to the image of Jesus Christ shall possess that land. For

"Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." (Rom. viii, 29)

Meekness was the special characteristic of the Son of God.

"He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer." (Is. liii, 7)

"But Jesus held His peace." (Matth. xxvi, 63)

"I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim." (Jer. xi, 19)

"Thy King cometh to thee, meek." (Matth. xxi, 5)

"Nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to Thee [O, Lord], but the prayer of the humble and meek has always pleased Thee." (Judith ix, 16)

"Meekness preserves the image of God, but anger destroys it." (S. Aug.)

"Nothing makes a man so like to God as meekness." (S. Chrys.)

"By meekness our King conquered the devil. The one was furious, the other suffered. He who was furious was conquered, the Sufferer became the Victor." (S. Aug.)

2. *By meekness we gain the friendship of our neighbor*

Obedience can be enforced by the exercise of authority, but kindness alone can win hearts.

"A sweet word multiplieth friends, and appeaseth enemies, and a gracious tongue in a good man aboundeth." (Eccli. vi, 5)

Who, in fact, can refrain from loving a kind man, who finds his pleasure in obliging every one, and who is always mild-tempered? But kindness has the power not only of making friends, but also of reconciling enemies. How often have we not seen the most stubborn anger disarmed by meekness? A man armed with this virtue knows so well how to manage different dispositions, how to insinuate himself into hearts, that he succeeds in reconciling those who were most divided. He is a true apostle who procures the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

"The servant of the Lord must not wrangle; but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient." (2 Tim. ii, 24)

"My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men." (Eccli. iii, 19)

"It is better to be humbled with the meek, than to divide spoils with the proud." (Prov. xvi, 19)

3. *Meekness renders us masters of ourselves*

If anger transports man outside of himself, mildness keeps him within the bounds of reason, makes him master of all the movements of his heart, and causes him to enjoy perfect tranquillity. Such is, in this life, the reward of meekness; and in this it differs from many other virtues which will have their recompense only in the life to come. Ah! what great advantages does not that interior peace which accompanies meekness gain for man! It raises him above all reverses of fortune, above all persecutions of his enemies; it renders him superior to insults, injuries, and calumnies.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls." (Matth. xi, 29)

"My son, keep thy soul in meekness." (Eccli. x, 31)

"His place is in peace." (Ps. lxxv, 3)

"My peace is with the humble and meek of heart." (*Imit.*, B. iii, c. 35)

"The peace of God which surpasses all understanding." (Phil. iv, 7)

II. PRACTICE OF MEEKNESS

It is one thing to be meek by temperament, it is quite another thing to possess meekness as a virtue. Those who are naturally mild have to do less violence to themselves in order to overcome their anger, than those who are of a hasty temper;—but this meekness may degenerate into cowardice if it is not sustained by strength and regulated by prudence.

True mildness does not consist in certain decorous manners, in certain affected expressions; many people bestow marks of friendship on those who are the objects of their dislike.

"An enemy is known by his lips, when in his heart he entertaineth deceit. When he shall speak low trust him not; because there are seven mischiefs in his heart. He that covereth hatred deceitfully, his malice shall be laid open in the public assembly." (Prov. xxvi, 24–26)

Meekness dwells chiefly in the heart, and the peculiarity of this virtue, says S. Augustine, is (1) to repress or restrain all movements of anger in us, and (2) to give place to the anger of others. Here we have in a few words its character and its practice.

1. *To repress or restrain all feelings of anger*

If the anger which breaks out in us is culpable, meekness represses its movements.

Yes, if you have the virtue of meekness you will be careful to check every movement of anger which urges you to take revenge, to injure your neighbor. You will stifle even the least feeling of bitterness which an injury done to you may cause to spring up in your heart.

"Be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ." (Ephes. iv, 32)

"In your patience you shall possess your souls." (Luke xxi, 19)

If the anger is praiseworthy and just, mildness directs it according to the rules of prudence and charity. Far from us be the sinful mildness which would not be touched by an offence against God, which would suffer everything, which would not correct the sinner, through fear of incurring his displeasure. Because

"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. i, 10)

Firmness, then, is necessary, anger is necessary, but anger ruled by mildness, anger that strives to destroy sin without wishing to destroy the sinner.

"Be ye angry and sin not." (Ps. iv, 5)

"If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness." (Gal. vi, 1)

"He is not angry with his brother who is angry with the sin of his brother. He, therefore, who is angry, not with the sin, but with his brother, is angry without cause." (S. Aug.)

"Not to be angry when we should be, is a sin: but to be angry more than is necessary is to add sin to sin." (S. Bern.)

2. *Finally mildness makes us yield to the anger of others, and urges us to employ suitable means to calm it*

It is easy to be gentle and obliging towards those who are kind and gentle towards us; it is easy to have patience when no one contradicts. "Do not the heathens do this?" (Matth. v, 47). But it is not easy to give way to the anger of others, to be always at peace with those who love nothing but strife.

"It is not a great thing to live with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And every one lives willingly in peace and loves those best who agree with him. But to be able to live peaceably with the obstinate and perverse or disorderly is a great grace." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 3)

An all-pervading meekness would be necessary for that, so as to suffer at all times and patiently endure all classes of people; a con-

stant meekness, so as not to be discouraged by the rude trials to which it is exposed. Such, however, Christian meekness ought to be: it is in yielding rather than in combating that it gains hearts.

"With them that hated peace I was peaceable." (Ps. cxix, 7)

"I was troubled and I spoke not." (Ps. lxxvi, 5)

"Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii, 21)

"Christ, when He was reviled, did not revile." (1 Pet. ii, 23)

"We are blasphemed, and we entreat." (1 Cor. iv, 13)

"Patience hath a perfect work." (Jas. i, 4)

"A passionate man stirreth up strifes: he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up." (Prov. xv, 18)

"A mild answer breaketh wrath: but a harsh word stirreth up fury." (Prov. xv, 1)

"Blessed be thou [said David to Abigail], who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood." (1 Kings xxv, 33)

"Shewing all mildness towards all men." (Tit. iii, 2)

"I beseech you by the mildness and modesty of Christ." (2 Cor. x, 1)

"To the evil of anger we oppose the most sweet virtue of patience." (S. Ambr.)

"Anger is overcome by mildness, fury is extinguished by gentleness." (S. Chrys.)

"Let all bitterness and anger, and indignation and clamor, and blasphemy be put away from you." (Ephes. iv, 31)

"Do good to them that hate you." (Matth. v, 44)

"A good peaceable man turns all things to good. . . . See how far thou art yet from true charity and humility, which knows not how to be angry with any one, or to be indignant save against self." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 3)

"In the Lord shall my soul be praised: let the meek hear and rejoice." (Ps. xxxiii, 3)

"The earth trembled and was still when God arose in judgment, to save all the meek of the earth." (Ps. lxxv, 9, 10)

"The Lord lifteth up the meek." (Ps. cxlvi, 6)

"And He will exalt the meek unto salvation." (Ps. cxlix, 4)

"Seek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, you that have wrought His judgment: seek the just, seek the meek: if by any means you may be hid in the day of the Lord's indignation." (Sophon ii, 3)

Divisions

I

There is *nothing more injurious to society and to the intercourse of*

life than anger. This is why the Saviour of the world has so strongly recommended meekness to us, and proposed it to us as a beatitude in this life, because it checks all excess of anger, and establishes good order and tranquillity everywhere.

II

1. *Merit of meekness.*

It consists in this, that meekness requires us to gain over ourselves a victory,

1°. the most heroic,

2°. the most lasting.

2. *Fruits of meekness.*

1°. Interior peace with ourselves,

2°. Exterior peace with our neighbors.

See how this virtue is rewarded even in the present life.

XCVIII

TEMPERANCE

"Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. v, 16)

The flesh has desires that are in opposition to the spirit and are the cause of unceasing warfare between the two. But the works, or rather the fruits, of the spirit,—namely, charity, patience, chastity, etc.—will give you the victory over your enemies in these combats. If you wish then to triumph over the attacks of the impure spirit, love chastity. If you would avoid intemperance, love temperance, be moderate at your meals. Follow the impulse of the spirit: "Walk in the spirit." To encourage you to practise temperance I will show you: I. In what it consists; II. what are its advantages.

I. IN WHAT TEMPERANCE CONSISTS

It is the characteristic of virtues to combat the vices opposed to them.

Intemperance consists chiefly in the immoderate use of things destined for the nourishment of the body, either in quantity, or quality, or in the manner in which such things are taken.

Temperance, which is the opposite of intemperance, should, therefore, consist in moderating: (1) the quantity, by restricting our nourishment to what is necessary; (2) the quality, taking only what is not forbidden; (3) the manner, allowing ourselves to regard food as a necessary help; (4) it also teaches us often to do without some portion of that which is permitted to us, so as not to expose ourselves to the danger of passing the prescribed limits.

1. *It can be easily shown that all excess in quantity is unworthy, not only of a Christian, but of a rational being.* It is certain that all excess which seriously injures the health and disturbs the reason of him who is guilty of it, is a grievous sin. However, in judging of this excess, the same rule must not be applied to all classes of people: a certain quantity may be a grave excess for one person without being so for another.

Give to nature only what is necessary: that is the first rule which every man should follow. How did the first Christians live?

"We encourage gatherings that are both virtuous and temperate;

for we neither indulge in feasting nor prolong the banquet, but we temper gaiety by gravity, by a pure speech, by a purer body." (Minut. Felix.)

Why does not the same temperance reign among us? If we curtailed the superfluous in order to give to charity, so many unhappy people would not be seen perishing of hunger and want. If Lazarus had received some of what was superfluous on the rich man's table!

"The just eateth and filleth his soul; but the belly of the wicked is never to be filled." (Prov. xiii, 25)

"Use as a frugal man the things that are set before thee; lest if thou eatest much, thou be hated." (Eccli. xxxi, 19)

"Whatever exceeds the necessary quantity in food is not nourishment, but disease; satiety is the source of all evils." (S. Chrys.)

"Man . . . is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. xlviii, 13)

"Our body is a beast; it very often carries us away and strives to turn us off the road; let us therefore hold this beast in check by fasts, let us withhold fodder from it when it is furious, and tame by hunger what we cannot subdue by the bit." (S. Aug.)

"There is no creature deserving of blame, the inordinate voracity of man is alone culpable." (*Id.*)

"Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense, and a stumbling-block." (Ps. lxviii, 23)

2. *But it is not enough to be temperate in the quantity of food, we must observe temperance in the quality also,* so as not to take food the use of which is forbidden by the laws of the Church. And yet how many there are who, under plausible excuses, have no scruple in transgressing these venerable laws. A pretended constitutional weakness, the fear of an illness that will never come, the dread of what people will say.

"Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat." (Eccli. xxxvii, 32)

"It is not becoming that a member under a thorn-crowned head should be fastidious." (S. Bern.)

3. *We must seek in food only the nourishment that is necessary.* We can, nay should, use the food that is necessary to keep up our health and strength; but we must not propose to ourselves the satisfying of the appetite; we must not have in view the pleasure which naturally accompanies the use of food. We must not eat for the sake of eating, but in order to sustain our powers and employ them in the service of God.

"Meat for the belly, and the belly for the meats; but God shall destroy both it and them." (1 Cor. vi, 13)

"They that are such serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly." (Rom. xvi, 18)

"Many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame." (Phil. iii, 18, 19)

"Satisfaction excuses itself under the plea of necessity, so that even a perfect man hardly perceives it." (S. Greg.)

"The vice is in the appetite, not in the food; for which reason we very often use the richer food without any fault, and sin in taking the poorer food." (*Id.*)

"What is sufficient for health will not satisfy pleasure." (S. Aug.)

"The body should be so far chastised by fasting that it may understand that food is granted to it not so much for pleasure, as because of the burden imposed on it." (Cassian)

"But, alas! Free from other temptations, I am fighting against the concupiscence of eating and drinking. Who is there that is not carried a little beyond the bounds of necessity? Whoever he is, he is noble; let him magnify Your name, [O Lord]; but I am not he, because I am a sinful man." (S. Aug.)

4. *We must also, in a spirit of penance, often retrench something of what we can take without passing beyond the limits of temperance.* I say, in a spirit of penance, and not through avarice, which would cause us to refuse to ourselves and to others even the nourishment that has been prescribed. That would not be the temperance which Christ recommends to us.

"Fasting is not a banking business, that we may make money by not eating: but that a poor man may eat in your place what you were about to eat; and that a twofold good may be done to you, not only that you are fasting, but also that another may not be hungry." (S. Greg. Nys.)

"Give to a hungry man what you refuse to your stomach." (*Id.*)

Christian temperance teaches us to be satisfied with what is necessary, to use it without affection, even to deprive ourselves from time to time, in a spirit of mortification, of something that is permitted to us, in order to avoid the danger of falling into excess. Of how many things do not people deprive themselves to recover their health?

Why would you not do for your soul something that is less difficult than what some do for the health of the body? Remember the words of S. Paul:

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. . . . Destroy not the work of God for meat." (Rom. xiv, 17, 20)

"They shall be scattered abroad to eat, and shall murmur if they be not filled." (Ps. lviii, 16)

"Young men in like manner exhort that they be sober." (Tit. ii, 6)

"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do; do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x, 31)

"If you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." (Rom. viii, 13)

II. ADVANTAGES OF TEMPERANCE

1. It procures many temporal advantages in the present life; 2. It is still more advantageous for the future life, and we can say of it what S. Paul says of godliness: "It is profitable to all things." (1 Tim. iv, 8)

1. *If intemperance is the ruin of the health and of the reason, it can be said that temperance is the faithful guardian of both the one and the other.* The proof of this truth is based on experience.

1°. *Temperance procures and preserves health.* Do we not see men who, with a delicate constitution, grow old in the practice of penance, while others, though more robust, perish prematurely in the lap of luxury?

"In many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished: but he that is temperate, shall prolong life." (Eccli. xxxvii, 33, 34)

"Sober drinking is health to soul and body." (Eccli. xxxi, 37)

"Gluttony kills very many, temperance kills none; innumerable people have been injured by drunkenness, no one has been injured by temperance; very many have died while feasting and have covered the table with their blood." (S. Ambr.)

"Gluttony kills more than the sword."

2°. *Temperance preserves man's reason in that state of liberty which makes him always master of himself.* His mind, disengaged from matter, is capable of the most serious application. A sober and temperate man is accessible at all times and to every one, affable to all, he is liked by every one.

"I thought in my heart, to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom and might avoid folly." (Eccli. ii, 3)

"Wisdom is not found in the land of them that live in delights." (Job xxxviii, 13)

"These have been ignorant through wine, and through drunkenness have erred." (Is. xxviii, 7)

"Gluttony is to be avoided as the vilest of all conditions; for nothing

so darkens the mind as a stomach filled to repletion." (S. Jerome)

"There is nothing more pernicious, more disgraceful, than gluttony; it renders the intellect dull and stupid, and the mind carnal; it blinds the understanding, and does not permit it to examine anything,—when drunkenness rules, reason is banished, the understanding is impaired, advice is unheeded, and the judgment is destroyed." (S. Chrys.)

2. *Temperance is especially advantageous for the future life.* The present life should be regarded as one of warfare.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare." (Job vii, 1)

In order to attain to the happiness of the future life, we have enemies to fight against; enemies within ourselves: our passions; enemies without: the world and the devil. But temperance supplies us with weapons to overcome them all.

1°. *Enemies within ourselves.*

S. Paul compares the spiritual warfare to those combats waged in the public games by athletes who are striving for the prize. This great saint reduced his body to subjection. Our body, in fact, is the greatest enemy we have to contend with in the fight for Heaven. Let us, then, make use of the same weapons to conquer the same enemies.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away." (1 Cor. ix, 25–27)

"As all carnal desires are restrained by abstinence, so all virtues of the soul are destroyed by the vice of gluttony." (S. Isid.)

2°. *Enemies outside ourselves.*

Temperance or abstinence is also necessary if we are to be victorious in the fight against the enemies from without, who are the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you would be on your guard against a raging lion,

"Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist ye strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world." (1 Pet. v, 8, 9)

How, in fact, will you be able to resist certain violent temptations which the devil excites in you, if you do not observe temperance, if you give to your body all that it demands? In vain will you pray to God to drive away the devil. Your prayers will not be efficacious because they are not accompanied by abstinence and mortification.

"This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (Mark ix, 28)

To prayer, then, we must join mortification, abstinence, and fasting. That is the shield used by the saints to ward off the arrows of the enemy.

"Believe me, who have had experience, Satan greatly fears the vigils, prayers, and fasts of those who lead good lives." (S. Anton.)

When you begin to practise temperance, you will very soon possess other virtues: you will have love for God, charity and justice towards your neighbor, because S. Paul makes all these virtues go together.

"We should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world." (Tit. ii, 12)

"No one can attain to the perfection of virtue unless he has first subdued the voracity of the stomach." (S. Isid.)

It is evident that if we require the aid of abstinence to resist the darts of Satan, we have not less need of it to overcome the efforts which worldlings, who are his agents, make to effect our ruin. Let us be on our guard against all those of whom the Apostle S. Jude has said:

"These are spots in their banquets, feasting together without fear, feeding themselves." (Jude, 12)

Divisions

I

The Saviour of the world, in nourishing the people, teaches us the temperance we should observe in our food. 1. Christ teaches us to cut off from the nourishment of the body whatever is unnecessary and immoderate, namely: 1°. eagerness for food, 2°. excess, 3°. delicacy.

1°. *Eagerness,* that is to say, too much attention to what concerns the comfort and support of the body.

To correct this fault Christ led the people into a place that was solitary and destitute of everything; and the crowd allowed itself to be led without a murmur. But, alas! how many Christians there are who make a god of their body, who think of nothing else.

2°. *Excess.* Nature is content with what is necessary, but luxury seeks for what is superfluous. Christ provided food for these four thousand men only when it was necessary for them. People act differently in our day. "Man is compared to brute beasts."

3°. *Delicacy.* Christ nourished the people with bread only. Now-a-days people seek the choicest meats: and yet there is nothing more dangerous or injurious than this daintiness. It gives strength to the

flesh to revolt and shake off the yoke, and withdraw itself from the dominion of the spirit.

II

Jesus Christ shows us how we can make the use of bodily food contribute to our holiness and perfection: 1°. by blessing the bread and giving thanks, 2°. by His adorable presence, and 3°. by works of charity.

1°. He blessed the bread and gave thanks to His Father. It is indeed right that we should discharge this duty, since it is from God we receive our food. Is it not strange that we should enjoy the blessings of God without thinking of Him and thanking Him for them?

2°. It was in the presence of Jesus Christ that the people took their food. God is everywhere present and sees all things; we should so act as never to lose sight of that divine Presence, but we should be particularly careful to remember the presence of God in the places and the company in which we most easily forget ourselves, as when at meals.

3°. Christ caused what remained of the bread to be gathered up. Rich people should act in a similar manner, so as to bestow on the poor whatever is superfluous. But very many things that would help the needy are destroyed. Those who do this or allow it to be done, expose themselves to the sad fate of the rich man in the Gospel. . . . May we gather from this discourse the grace to free ourselves from the slavery of the body.

XCIX

CHASTITY

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (Matth. v, 8)

Chastity is one of the most sublime, most lovable, and most perfect virtues of religion.

"The ornament of all beauty, and the glory of religion." (S. Cypr.)

The holy Fathers in their writings never grow weary of praising its glory and value, of exalting its excellence, of proclaiming its prerogatives and grandeur, and of praising it in the most glowing terms. Consider: I. The excellence and advantages of chastity; II. The necessity of this virtue; III. The practices by which we can preserve it.

I. EXCELLENCE AND ADVANTAGES OF CHASTITY

Chastity is a virtue that inspires in us a horror of all the unlawful pleasures of the flesh. It is a virtue so beautiful that even those who have not the courage to practise it, are forced to admire it. In fact, (1) Chastity makes us like to angels; (2) it makes us in a certain manner like to God, and conformable to Christ made Man.

1. *Chastity makes us like to the blessed spirits.* Jesus Christ Himself has taught us this consoling truth.

"In the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be married; but shall be as the angels of God in Heaven." (Matth. xxii, 30)

"You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." (Rom. viii, 9)

"I beheld; and lo a lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty-four thousand. . . . And they sang as it were a new canticle; . . . and no man could say the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (Apoc. xiv, 1, 3, 4)

"To live outside the body while in the flesh is not an earthly but a heavenly life." (S. Chrys.)

"Virginity is the straining of a corrupted body after a spiritual substance." (S. John Clymac.)

"You [virgins] already possess in this world the glory of the resurrection." (S. Cypr.)

"A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace; and no price is worthy of a continent soul." (Eccli. xxvi, 19, 20)

"Chastity makes angels; he who has preserved it is an angel." (S. Ambr.)

"Let no one wonder if virgins are compared to angels, since they are united to the Lord of angels." (S. Ambr.)

"The integrity of virginity is the portion of angels, and in corruptible flesh it is the imitation of perpetual incorruption." (S. Aug.)

"In virginity we have a model of angelic holiness." (S. Athan.)

But what raises beyond measure the glory of this virtue and the merit of those who inviolably preserve it, is that it is in some manner more ravishing and more glorious in us, weak mortals, than in the heavenly spirits. It raises man above the angels. In the angels purity is without combat; in man it is the fruit of his victory in war.

"Chastity makes an angel of man." (S. Bern.)

"It is more meritorious to acquire angelic glory than to possess it. To be an angel is a mark of happiness, to be a virgin is a mark of virtue." (S. Pet. Chrys.)

"The chaste will have a most honorable and illustrious place among the angels." (S. Basil)

"O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men." (Wis. iv, 1)

"The victory of virgins is greater than that of the angels; for the angels live without the flesh, but virgins triumph in the flesh." (S. Ambr.)

"What is more beautiful than chastity, which makes pure what was conceived of impure seed, makes a friend of an enemy, makes an angel of a man?" (S. Bern.)

"Do you not see the excellence of virginity? how it so benefits mankind that it makes those who live in the body equal to pure spirits?" (S. Chrys.; Office of S. Aloysius Gonzaga)

2. What completes the most perfect praise of purity, and makes known to us all its value is, that preserving our bodies and souls free from all corruption, *makes us in a certain manner like to God Himself,* who is incorruptible. In cherishing and practising chastity, we become living images of Jesus Christ, who has rendered this virtue so beautiful for all ages. The Son of God found this virtue so full of beauty, so noble and perfect, that having resolved to become Man, He wished to choose a virgin for His mother, a virgin prophet for His precursor, and a virgin apostle for His beloved disciple. . . .

"He who begins [to practise] the virtue of God will be like to God." (Lact.)

"For since the Blessed Mary preserved chastity above all human nature, therefore she conceived Christ the Lord in her womb." (S. Chrys.)

"That disciple whom Jesus loved." (John xxi, 20)

"But Jesus loved him because a special prerogative of chastity had made him worthy of greater love, since the virgin chosen by Himself remained a virgin for all time." (S. Jerome)

"The virgin [John] alone recognizes the Virgin, Christ, and says to Peter: It is the Lord." (S. Jer.)

"He left the Virgin Mother to the care of the virgin disciple." (*Id.*)

"Because thou hast loved chastity . . . thou shalt be blessed for ever." (Judith xv, 11)

"O Chastity! that dost bloom like a rose in the midst of the body and soul, and dost fill the whole house with the fragrance of thy perfume!" (S. Ephrem)

"He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the king for his friend." (Prov. xxii, 11)

"Incorruption bringeth near to God." (Wis. vi, 20)

"O virginity! crown that never fadest, shrine of the Holy Spirit, most precious gem, found by few!" (S. Athan.)

"A wonderful thing is virginity, which makes man very like the incorruptible God." (S. Basil)

"Our Lord came on earth through the chaste members of a virgin in order to show that God is the Giver of chastity." (S. Aug.)

"Chastity holds a glorious and illustrious place among virtues; because it alone helps the pure minds of men to see God." (S. Cypr.)

II. NECESSITY OF CHASTITY

Let us not be content with admiring the excellence of this virtue, let us remember that it is necessary for every Christian, whose body, by Baptism, became the temple of the living God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

"Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. . . . Or know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God? For you are bought with a great price." (1 Cor. vi, 15, 19, 20)

"Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall the Lord destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are." (1 Cor. iii, 16, 17)

Christians are specially bound to observe chastity. It is indispensably necessary for salvation. The holy Scriptures establish this truth very clearly:

"Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see God." (Hebr. xii, 14)

"For know ye this and understand that no fornicator or unclean . . . hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v, 5)

"Do not err: Neither fornicators . . . nor adulterers nor the effeminate, nor liers with mankind . . . shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi, 9, 10)

"Without are dogs . . . and unchaste." (Apoc. xxii, 15)

"There shall not enter into it [the heavenly Jerusalem] anything defiled, or that worketh abomination." (Apoc. xxi, 27)

"Whatever your other virtues, good qualities, and good works may be, you are only ploughing the sand if you have not the robe or cincture of chastity." (S. Jerome)

"Chastity is to be specially guarded, because if it is lost all other virtues are ruined." (*Id.*)

This virtue ought to embrace man's whole being and sanctify him in both body and soul. He should be chaste in mind, in heart, in will; he should be chaste in his thoughts, in his affections, in his desires; he should be chaste in body: his eyes, ears, tongue, hands, all his senses, should bear the stamp of purity.

"With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it. . . . Let thy eyes look straight on." (Prov. iv, 23, 25)

"My eyes hath wasted my soul because of all the daughters of my city." (Lament. iii, 51)

"It is not becoming to look upon that which it is not lawful to desire." (S. Greg.)

"I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job xxxi, 1)

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity." (1 Tim. iv, 12)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor: not in the passion of lust, like the gentiles that know not God. . . . For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification." (1 Thess. iv, 3–7)

The sin opposed to the virtue of chastity is one of those that do not admit of any smallness of matter. Every sin of impurity is mortal when it is fully voluntary. Thus there is no vice that destroys more

souls. It is a sin that causes very great scandal and is the source of innumerable crimes.

Not only the loss of the soul and the lowest degree of degradation, but also the ruin of the body, the loss of health, of honor, of property, and the downfall of families are too often the sad results of impurity. How then is it possible not to conceive a great horror of this vice! How is it possible that we do not make every effort to preserve ourselves from it!

"Keep thyself chaste." (1 Tim. v, 22)

III. PRACTICES BY WHICH TO PRESERVE CHASTITY

1. *Not to trust in our own strength, but to address ourselves to God in prayer*

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man. . . . Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence." (Jer. xvii, 5, 7)

"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Philip. iv, 13)

"As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him." (Wis. viii, 21)

"Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

"Blessed is the man that is always fearful." (Prov. xxviii, 14)

"A wise man feareth and declineth from evil." (Prov. xiv, 16)

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor. iv, 7)

2. *To resist this shameful vice from the very beginning, from the moment the first thought of it presents itself*

"Destroy the enemy while he is small." (S. Jerome)

"Resist the beginning. . . . We must be always on the watch, and especially at the beginning of a temptation." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 13).

"It is a more difficult thing to persevere in a life of chastity than to suffer martyrdom for chastity." (Tert.)

3. *To avoid idleness*

"Idleness hath taught much evil." (Eccli. xxxiii, 29)

"This was the iniquity of Sodom . . . the idleness of her." (Ezech. xvi, 49)

"Be constantly engaged in some work, so that the devil may always find you occupied." (S. Jerome)

4. *To avoid intemperance and all kinds of excesses*

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury." (Eph. v, 18)

"I will never believe that a drunkard is a chaste man." (S. Jerome)

5. *To avoid the occasions of this sin*

They are: too familiar conversations, dangerous intimacies, etc.

"He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"You are not stronger than David, nor wiser than Solomon. And if these men, who were so holy, were conquered by incautious familiarity with, and the pernicious blandishments of, women, what do those think of themselves who neither fear nor blush not only to associate with women not related to them, but even to remain in the same house, and to be always, or at least very often, present at their feasts? We can say of such people what the Apostle said of the widow addicted to voluptuous pleasure: That, though living, she was dead." (S. Aug.)

"Therefore, if you would overcome impurity, fly when attacked by it." (*Id.*)

"It is characteristic of pure minds in a certain sense to see a fault where there is no fault." (S. Greg.)

"Are you so foolish that, whereas you began in the spirit, you would now be made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. iii, 3)

"It is characteristic of virgins to tremble with fear at the approaches of a man, and to dread his addresses." (S. Ambr.)

"Virgins who are truly such, are accustomed to live in constant fear, and, in order to fly from what should be avoided, they tremble even at what is safe." (S. Bern.)

6. *In time of temptation think on the Passion and death of Jesus Christ*

"My God hangs on a gibbet, and shall I give myself up to pleasure?" (S. Bern.)

"There is no remedy so powerful, so efficacious against the heat of lust, as the death of my Redeemer." (S. Aug.)

"I have no remedy so efficacious in all things as the wounds of Christ. In them I sleep securely, and I awake filled with courage." (*Id.*)

"The fiery darts of the devil are to be extinguished by the rigor of fasts and vigils." (S. Jerome)

"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)

"There is nothing more likely to overcome the lewdness of the flesh than the thought of what man will be in death." (S. Bonav.)

Division

1. *It is indispensably necessary for each one of us to keep his body pure*

1°. *First reason:* such is the will of God, who commands us to avoid everything that is contrary to holy purity.

2°. *Second reason:* our vocation as Christians, because our bodies are consecrated to God.

3°. *Third reason:* without this virtue we are altogether unworthy to receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.—"Give not that which is holy to dogs." (Matth. vii, 6)

2. *In what does purity consist and how is it to be preserved?*

There are two kinds of purity, that of the body and that of the soul. There are also conjugal purity, virginal purity, and that which is peculiar to those who were married but whose spouses are now dead. To preserve this purity:

1°. Let us have recourse to Jesus Christ. He will say to us: "This kind [of devils] is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." (Matth. xvii, 20)

2°. Let us have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance.

C

TEMPTATIONS

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." (Matth. iv, 1)

As Christ endured all His sufferings for our sake, so He permitted the devil to tempt Him, in order that we might not be overcome by temptations.

"For this reason was Christ tempted, that a Christian might not be overcome by temptation." (S. Aug.)

"Had Christ not been tempted, He would not have taught us by His example how to resist temptation." (*Id.*)

"Christ wished to be tempted, in order that He might overcome the devil, and deliver him to His disciples crushed." (S. Jerome)

Jesus Christ is our Head; He wished to show us by His own example how to overcome temptation. It is not, then, a misfortune to be tempted, since Christ Himself was tempted; but the sovereign evil of man is to yield to temptation. We must, therefore, learn how to resist it, and for that purpose must know: I. The different temptations to which man is subject; II. The means of overcoming them.

I. THE DIFFERENT TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH MAN IS SUBJECT

The life of man on earth is a kind of unceasing temptation:

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare [or temptation]." (Job vii, 1)

How pitiable is the lot of man in this life, in which he is always in danger of perishing! But we should be consoled by the knowledge that God gives us all the graces necessary to resist temptations, and permits us to be tempted only for our advantage. In fact, (1) temptation affords us an occasion of humbling ourselves and of having recourse to God; (2) it serves to test our virtue; (3) it enables us to merit the crown which God has promised us.

"God tempted Abraham. . . . And he [the angel] said to him: Now I know that thou fearest God." (Gen. xxii, 1, 12)

"The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. xiii, 3)

"God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself." (Wis. iii, 5)

"Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me." (2 Cor. xii, 7)

"My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations." (Jas. i, 2)

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation." (2 Pet. ii, 9)

"What doth he know, that hath not been tried?" (Eccli. xxxiv, 9)

"No one knows himself unless he is tempted." (S. Aug.)

"The more the devil is permitted to tempt you, the better it is for you to be exercised and proved, so that you who do not know yourself may find out from yourself what you are." (*Id.*)

"If you are never tempted, you will never be proved; it is better to be tempted and proved than to be rejected without being tempted." (*Id.*)

"God permits temptations because by them virtue is tried and strengthened; and he who does not yield when tempted, receives a more glorious crown than the man who has not been tempted at all." (*Id.*)

"The man who does not sin because he is not tempted, does not deserve much praise." (*Ibid.*)

"God tempts for one reason, the devil for another; for the devil tempts in order to corrupt; God, in order to crown and approve." (S. Ambr.)

"When you are tempted, remember that the crown is prepared." (*Id.*)

"When you are fighting against the devil, God is preparing an eternal crown for you." (*Id.*)

"This temptation is sent to prove your faith, to strengthen your virtue, to increase your merit." (S. Chrys.)

"This is to us the greatest proof that God is watching over us." (*Id.*)

"By trials tepidity is excelled and a holy fear admitted." (*Id.*)

"As a tempest tries the captain of a ship, a contest the athlete, a battle the soldier, a calamity the high-spirited,—so does temptation try the Christian." (S. Basil)

"There are no virtuous works without temptations, there is no battle without an enemy, no victory without an encounter." (S. Leo)

But what are the temptations which we have to fight against? There are three principal temptations which the devil employs most frequently to destroy men: (1) the temptation of pleasure; (2) the temptation of vain-glory; (3) the temptation of self-interest. Such also were the three objects which the evil spirit proposed to Christ in the desert:

"All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John ii, 16)

1. *The attraction of pleasure*

It is so much the more dangerous to us in that it sympathises, so to say, with our nature; we have within us an inclination which draws us to pleasures, and against which it is difficult for us to defend ourselves. Finding in pleasures that which satisfies our senses, we easily deliver ourselves up to them when they present themselves. But what increases our misery is that, by the fall of our first parents our nature has become so prone to sin that it is not satisfied with lawful pleasures, but seeks those that are forbidden. It is thus by this bait of pleasure that the devil, who knows our weakness, attacks us most frequently. Is it not while seeking pleasure in assemblies, feasts, and meetings that people become guilty of innumerable sins?

"The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do . . . For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." (Rom. vii, 19–23)

"The creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise. For the beginning of fornication is the devising of idols; and the invention of them is the corruption of life." (Wis. xiv, 11, 12)

"For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." (Gal. v, 17)

"Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured." (Jas. i, 14)

"That old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world." (Apoc. xii, 9)

"The evil spirit has a thousand ways of injuring us." (S. Jerome)

"The devil lies in ambush for each man with the vices that allure him most." (S. Greg.)

"We have in our flesh an innate demon urging us to every evil." (S. Chrys.)

2. *Vain-glory*

It was by this sin that the rebel angel was ruined, when he wished to make himself equal to God. A man desires to attain to honors and dignities; he makes use of every imaginable means to secure his object. If his wishes are satisfied, his heart is filled with pride and all the sins of which pride is the source—contempt of others, arrogance, revenge on those by whom he thinks himself insulted. Vain-glory

often undermines the most solid virtue and destroys the merit of the best actions, those deeds being done only to draw on him who does them the praise and applause of men.

"Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi, 14)

"The world leads forth a double line of battle against the soldiers of Christ: it flatters in order to deceive them; it terrifies in order to crush them." (S. Aug.)

"The devil flatters in order to deceive; he pleases in order to injure; he entices in order to kill." (S. Cypr.)

"A vain man is lifted up into pride, and thinketh himself born free like a wild ass's colt. (Job xi, 12)

"They trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches." (Ps. xlviii, 7)

"Why dost thou glory in malice, thou that art mighty in iniquity?" (Ps. li, 3)

"Extol not thyself in doing thy work." (Eccli. x, 29)

"Glory not in apparel at any time, and be not exalted in the day of thine honor." (Eccli. xi, 4)

"They have walked after vanity, and are become vain." (Jer. ii, 5)

"Fear not the words of a sinful man, for his glory is dung and worms; to-day he is lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found." (1 Mach. ii, 62, 63)

"They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." (John xii, 43)

"They became vain in their thoughts . . . professing themselves to be wise they became fools." (Rom. i, 21, 22)

"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv, 7)

"Let us not be made desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another." (Gal. v, 26)

"Whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. iii, 19)

"Every kind of iniquity may be found in sinful works; but pride and vain-glory destroy our good works." (S. Aug.)

"What are worldly honors but sinful deceptions?" (*Id.*)

"You carry a load of gold, that is, good works; you must avoid the robber, namely, vain and empty glory in the eyes of men." (S. Jerome)

"Vain-glory is an agreeable plunderer of spiritual works, a pleasant enemy of souls, a most flattering pillager of our goods." (S. Basil)

"When vain-glory has filled the mind of a vain man, it produces

in that mind arrogance, hypocrisy, and impiety." (S. Ambr.)

3. *The temptation of self-interest*

Where is the man who does not suffer himself to be dazzled by the pomp of wealth?

"Who is he and we will praise him?" (Eccli. xxxi, 9)

Worldly wealth is the chief motive power of the greater part of the actions of mankind. Men desire to possess it, no matter how they are to acquire it. What injustice against others, what frauds, what criminal intrigues to amass riches! But it is especially through love of perishable goods that the devil holds the avaricious man captive in his chains. What does he not make the miser do in order to gain riches and to preserve what he has gained?

"All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." (Matth. iv, 9)

"From avarice spring treason, fraud, falsehood, perjury, restlessness, and violence." (S. Greg.)

"Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart?" (Acts v, 3)

"Everything is full of snares, of dangers; there are dangers in the fulness of riches, and in the restraints of poverty; those raise up pride, these excite murmurs. There is temptation in health and in sickness: the one is a source of negligence, the other a cause of sadness. There is a snare in fear, there is a snare in security." (S. Leo.)

"He that trusteth to his riches, shall fall." (Prov. xi, 28)

"Gold and silver hath destroyed many." (Eccli. viii, 3)

"They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi, 9)

"Blessed is he who has not gone after those things which, when possessed, are a burden, when loved, pollute, when lost, torture." (S. Bern.)

II. MEANS OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

However powerful may be the enemy of our salvation that tempts us to destruction, we can never be overcome except through our own fault; we can always come out of temptation with profit to ourselves.

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x, 13)

"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13)

"The devil can bark, but he can bite only him who is willing to be bitten." (S. Aug.)

We are, it is true, easily surprised, and weak in resisting; but we have only to co-operate with grace which strengthens our weakness, and we shall never be overcome. What means must we employ? There are two principal means to which all others may be referred: (1) vigilance, (2) prayer.

"Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. xxvi, 41)

1. *Vigilance.*

In what does this vigilance consist which is so necessary for us if we are not to be surprised and overcome by temptation? It consists in preparing ourselves for the temptation; in avoiding dangerous occasions; in repressing our passions which supply our enemies with arms to conquer us by temptation. Such are the means which Jesus Christ suggests to us by His retreat in the desert, by His retirement from the world, by His fast of forty days.

a) To prepare ourselves for temptation is to fear and at the same time courageously to resist its attacks; we must not trust in ourselves, but neither must we allow ourselves to be discouraged.

"Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." (Eccli. ii, 1)

We have to fight against powerful enemies.

"Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness." (Eph. vi, 12)

"Be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power . . . Take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect . . . In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; and take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit [which is the word of God], by all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance." (Eph. vi, 10, 13–18)

"In that wherein He Himself [Christ] hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted." (Hebr. ii, 18)

"If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii, 31)

"Not to trust in our own strength is the surest means of overcoming the devil." (Cassiod.)

b) In order that God may help us by His grace, we must avoid everything that would be to us an occasion of sin. We shall strive in vain

to triumph over our enemies if we expose ourselves to the danger of being overcome. God has promised to sustain us in all temptations that are inseparable from our state, but He will not support us in those temptations to which we voluntarily expose ourselves.

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matth. iv, 7)

"He that loveth the danger shall perish in it." (Eccli. iii, 27)

"Fly [then] and thou hast conquered . . . He who does not wish to fly when in danger, desires to perish." (S. Aug.)

c) But this victory will be complete only when we take care to mortify the passions that excite us to sin. We can fly from exterior enemies, but our passions are domestic enemies which we cannot avoid; we must, therefore, restrain and crush them by constant mortification: this is a duty which Christian vigilance imposes on us. (See the following instruction: Mortification of the Passions.)

"Believe one who has had experience, Satan trembles very much at the vigils, prayers, and fasts of those who lead good lives." (S. Anton.)

"Be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith." (1 Pet. v, 8, 9)

"The tempter is not conquered unless he is despised." (S. Aug.)

"The temptations of the devil must be resisted; an adder should not be fostered, lest it develop into a serpent." (S. Cypr.)

"Let no one dare to expose himself voluntarily to temptations." (S. Chrys.)

"It is human to be tempted in the heart, but it is diabolical to be overcome by the temptation." (S. Greg.)

"Not to experience temptation is angelic; to be tempted and to overcome temptation is Christian; to consent to temptation and sin through malice is diabolical." (S. Anselm.)

"Delay in resisting temptation fosters and strengthens it." (S. Greg.)

"The enemy can excite a movement of the flesh, but it is in your power to give or refuse consent." (S. Bern.)

"With all watchfulness keep thy heart." (Prov. iv, 23)

"Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times." (Luke xxi, 36)

"There shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them; therefore watch." (Acts xx, 30, 31)

"Keep thyself, therefore, and thy soul carefully." (Deut. iv, 9)

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith." (1 Cor. xvi, 13)

"We have need of great vigilance, since we are engaged in an unceasing war to which there is no truce." (S. Chrys.)

"A man keeps a careless watch when he is anxious about worldly affairs." (S. Greg.)

"He is on the watch who keeps the eyes of his soul fixed on the true light; he is on the watch who practises what he believes; he is on the watch who banishes from his heart the darkness of sloth and negligence." (*Id.*)

"If you would be secure, watch, place a bolt on your door, that is, place the law of divine fear in your mouth, that you may say with the Prophet: I have said: I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue." (Ps. xxxviii, 1) (S. Chrys.)

"For grace, I say, is given only to him who watches." (*Id.*)

"Let not one of us begin to sleep, let not one be slow to cultivate virtue: this is plainly what the Scriptures call sleep." (*Id.*)

"Do you not see that while we are oppressed by sleep, our property is not secure, that it is exposed and accessible to those who are waiting to steal it?" (*Id.*)

"Let the mind be on the watch, let it trust nothing, but examine all things, so that it may take precautions against the snares of the enemy who is lying in ambush." (S. Greg.)

"Let us be vigilant in all our works, lest we either omit what is commanded or do what is forbidden." (S. Bern.)

"To be watchful and attentive, to dread all things and to observe all things, is the duty of one who fears his enemies; indolent carelessness produces sleep." (*Id.*)

"If our life is so full of temptations that it may be justly called one uninterrupted temptation, the greatest vigilance and prayer are necessary lest we be led into it." (*Id.*)

2. *But we shall fight and watch in vain if the Lord does not fight and watch with us.*

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Ps. cxxvi, 1)

Let us, therefore, ask for His help in fervent prayer; let us raise our eyes towards the holy mountain . . .

"I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me." (Ps. cxx, 1)

The Lord is always ready to help us.

"He will overshadow thee with his shoulders . . . He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him." (Ps. xc, 4, 15)

"Strive, I will help; conquer, I will crown." (S. Aug.)

"Christ Himself strives with us; He takes part with us in the fight; and He crowns and is crowned at the same time." (S. Cypr.)

"There is no surer proof that the devils have been conquered by us,

than the ferocity with which they attack us." (S. John Climacus)

"That ever-watchful tempter attacks more vehemently those whom he sees abstaining from sin." (S. Leo)

"The devil is permitted to try to do something, so that he may be conquered by those who remain faithful to the grace of Jesus Christ." (*Id.*)

"I sent to know your faith; lest perhaps he that tempteth, should have tempted you, and our labor should be made vain." (1 Thess. iii, 5)

"Lord, save us, we perish." (Matth. viii, 25)

"And lead us not into temptation." (Matth. vi, 13)

Division

There are three things to be considered in temptations:

1. What we ought to do *before* temptation:
1°. To foresee it;
2°. To use every effort to avoid it;
3°. To prepare to resist it.

2. What we ought to do *during* temptation:
1°. To fight bravely;
2°. To implore help from Heaven;
3°. To remain faithful to God.

3. What we ought to do *after* having overcome temptation:
1°. Not to attribute the victory to ourselves;
2°. To give all the glory to God.

CI

MORTIFICATION OF THE PASSIONS

"Lord, save us, we perish." (Matth. viii, 25)

The tempest that terrified the Apostles is an image of that which the passions stir up in the soul. This is the state of many people who abandon themselves to the violence of their passions, and who would most certainly perish if they did not awake Jesus Christ, who is, as it were, asleep in their hearts, by imploring Him with a lively faith to have pity on them; and if this adorable Saviour, touched by their prayers, did not command the winds and the sea to be still: "He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm." (Matth. viii, 26). It is of this tempest of the passions that I am going to speak. Consider: I. The reasons why we should repress our passions; II. The means to be employed in repressing them.

I. THE REASONS THAT OBLIGE US TO MORTIFY OUR PASSIONS

We must mortify our passions if we wish to belong to Jesus Christ. "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v, 24)

Without the mortification of the passions, (1) there is no solid conversion, (2) no perfect virtue, (3) no true peace.

1. *Without mortification there is no solid conversion*

To turn away from sin and lead a new life, we must fight not only against sin but also against everything that incites us to sin. The Apostle teaches us that the occupation of a Christian ought to consist in destroying in himself two things: the first is sin; he should not be either avaricious or impure. The second is the passions that incite to sin.

"Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness . . . But now lay you also all away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth. Lie not one to another; stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new." (Coloss. iii, 5, 8–10)

People imagine that it is sufficient to avoid certain grosser sins; and they excuse the voluntary thought, the sinful desire, the passions which incite us to commit crime. But is this all that is required to constitute a true conversion? Evidently not. You have left the fire under the ashes; on the first occasion the passions will be rekindled, and you will fall again and more dangerously than before.

"We have all fallen as a leaf, and our iniquities as the wind, have taken us away." (Is. lxiv, 6)

This is why the Holy Ghost, speaking of the man who allows himself to be ruled by his passions, says:

"His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust." (Job xx, 11)

"God delivered them up to shameful affections." (Rom. i, 26)

"I let them go according to the desires of their heart." (Ps. lxxx, 13)

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Matth. xvi, 24)

"Believe me, vices pruned, sprout again; put to flight, they return; extinguished, they are again set on fire; stunned, they are again roused up." (S. Bern.)

"Our victory is within us; let the Christian strive manfully to conquer as Christ conquered." (S. Aug.)

"Conquer thyself and the world is conquered." (*Id.*)

"We subdue lions, and when they are tamed, we restore to them their inclinations; and do you doubt that you can change the ferocity of the passions into meekness?" (S. Chrys.)

"There is no one born without vices; happiest is he who is beset by the smallest." (S. Jerome)

2. Without mortification of the passions there is no perfect virtue

"They who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. viii, 8)

No one can make progress, or persevere in grace, unless he subdues his passions. You abstain, you fast; but what good will it do you if you employ your tongue in uttering lies, curses, oaths? You weep for your sins; but your tears will be vain and fruitless if you do not cast off the yoke of your passions. The spirit of revenge sometimes causes tears, but they are tears of anger; avarice, deceived in its calculations, sheds tears, but they are tears of self-interest. Ah! what tears lost! What good works without a reward! Sinners, slaves of their tyrannical passions, will present their alms, their fasts . . . they will say:

"Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not regarded; have we humbled our souls, and Thou hast not taken notice?" (Is. lviii, 3)

God will answer them:

"Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found . . . Behold you fast for debates and strife, and strike with the fist wickedly." (Is. 3, 4)

"Is this such a fast as I have chosen, for a man to afflict his soul for a day? . . . Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness." (Is. 5, 6)

"Why call you Me, Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi, 46)

"He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." (Prov. xxviii, 9)

"Mortification has power to cleanse from sin, to repress vice, to increase virtue, to bring spiritual consolation, to edify the neighbor, and to merit glory." (S. Bonav.)

"Do you wish to see God? In the first place, then, think of purifying your heart, and cast out whatever you see is displeasing to Him." (S. Aug.)

3. *Without mortification of the passions no one can enjoy true peace*

"Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." (John viii, 34)

"By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave." (2 Pet. ii, 19)

What a sad state is that of a slave! Yet a slave has only one master, while a sinner has as many masters as there are sinful inclinations to which he is obedient. If he is avaricious, jealous, vindictive, immodest, what torments his passions will cause him to suffer!

"He burns with his own fires, and is consumed with the torches of his sins." (S. Ambr.)

"Each passion and emotion, when it gains power and domineers, becomes the tyrant of our minds." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"Whenever a man sets his heart unduly upon any object, he at once loses his interior peace. Thus the proud and the grasping are never at rest. It is then by resisting the passions that true peace is found, and not by yielding to them." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 6)

You have abandoned Me, saith the Lord:

"Your fathers forsook Me and went after strange gods . . . And you also have done worse than your fathers: for behold every one of you walketh after the perverseness of his own evil heart, so as not to hearken to Me." (Jer. xvi, 11, 12)

But consider what will happen to you:

"I will cast you forth out of this land, into a land which you know

not, nor your fathers; and there you shall serve strange gods day and night, which shall not give you any rest." (Jer. xvi, 13)

"Destruction and happiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known." (Ps. xiii, 3)

"[But] much peace have they that love thy law." (Ps. cxviii, 165)

"I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin." (Rom. vii, 23)

"Neither have they rest day nor night, who have adored the beast and his image." (Apoc. xiv, 11)

"The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God." (Is. lvii, 20)

"From whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences which war in your members?" (Jas. iv, 1)

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, . . . contentions, etc." (Gal. v, 19, 20)

"Thou hast decreed, O Lord, and so it is, that every sinful soul should be a punishment to itself." (S. Aug.)

"He who does not know how to control his passions is like a horse carried away by frenzy, that is tossed about, crushed, and wounded." (S. Ambr.)

"Every passion is servile." (*Id.*)

"To have conquered sensuality is a very great happiness, and there is no victory greater than that which is gained over the passions; a great victory indeed, and to be purchased only by blood and sweat." (S. Cypr.)

"He is really free, and alone chief and king of kings, who is free from his passions." (S. Chrys.)

"There is nothing to be desired by any one so much as to enjoy peace of mind, and to control his passions." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"If you have completely conquered yourself, you will more easily subdue other things; to triumph over yourself is a perfect victory." (Thos. à Kempis)

"The desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi, 10)

"Evil passions, depart into the depths, I will plunge you in lest I should be overwhelmed by you." (S. Jerome)

II. MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED IN REPRESSING THE PASSIONS

Among the means to be employed in resisting the passions there are

three which appear to be more necessary, and at the same time more efficacious: (1) to resist them at once; (2) to oppose to the vices to which we are tempted, the opposite virtues; (3) to wage regular and unceasing war against them.

1. *To resist them at once*

It is most important to subdue the passions at once, not to suffer them to gain any power.

"If the spirit of him that hath power, ascend upon thee, leave not thy place; because care will make the greatest sins to cease." (Eccle. x, 4)

"Thy lust shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it." (Gen. iv, 7)

"Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." (Rom. vi, 12)

"As long as we dwell in the tabernacle of this mortal body, and are enveloped in weak flesh, we can govern and rule our passions and emotions, but we cannot cut them off." (S. Jerome)

"You have indeed been created a ruler for this purpose, that you might govern your passions, and subdue the beasts, the reptiles." (S. Basil)

"Although the captain of a ship has not received the power to command the sea to be calm, according to his judgment and will, yet we have full power to regulate our lives so as to have them free from all disturbance of the passions." (*Id.*)

"To mortify the motions of the flesh, and the passions, to weaken them each day, to restrain them, to crush them, is our work in this life." (S. John Clim.)

2. *We must strive earnestly to practise the virtues that are opposed to the vices which trouble us*

We must fight against gluttony by the practice of temperance, against anger by mildness, against lust by prayer and fasting, and so forth.

Vices are cured by the practice of the opposite virtues.

"This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." (Matth. xvii, 20)

"He was mindful of us in our affliction . . . and He redeemed us from our enemies." (Ps. cxxxv, 23, 24)

3. *We must wage a systematic and unceasing war against our passions*

A systematic war: we must attack them one after the other. To attack them all together is too great a task. Your passions are like

an immense fire; if you try to extinguish them all at the same time, you will not succeed in doing so; but separate them, divide them, and you will overcome them.

"This should be our work, namely, to overcome ourselves, and daily gain more power over ourselves." (à Kempis)

"Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." (2 Cor. iv, 10)

Arm yourselves with a holy zeal; consider the example of so many saints, of so many fervent Christians.

"We should specially bear in mind that he who remembers that he has done unlawful things, should strive to abstain from certain things even though they are lawful." (S. Greg.)

"For there are certain things which it is easier to cut off altogether than to use in moderation." (S. Chrys.)

"Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured." (Jas. i, 14)

"We are the circumcision, who in spirit serve God, and glory in Christ Jesus, not having confidence in the flesh." (Philip. iii, 3)

"Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." (Eccli. xviii, 30, 31)

"The patient man is better than the valiant; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities." (Prov. xvi, 32)

"Bad morals are worse enemies than dangerous exterior foes." (S. Ambr.)

"The passions wage war, do you wage war with them; they attack, do you attack; they assault, do you assault; attend to this one thing, that they do not conquer." (S. Aug.)

"Chastise your body, and you will conquer the devil; for this is how S. Paul has taught us to fight against him." (*Id.*)

What consolation for us when we shall have conquered these passions. They themselves will assist in our triumph:

"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii, 1)

"O Lord, Father and God of my life, . . . take from me the greediness of the belly, and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind." (Eccli. xxiii, 4, 6)

Divisions

I

1. *We should labor to repress and conquer our passions:*
1°. Because they are the source of all our vices and sins;
2°. Because they are an obstacle to all virtues;
3°. Because they are a hindrance to the discharge of our duties.

2. *It is easier to conquer our passions than is commonly believed.* In fact,
1°. We have to suffer more in satisfying our inordinate passions than in fighting against them; for what tyranny do they not exercise over us when we obey them?
2°. The joy, the peace, which we find in victory over our passions, is to be preferred to all the satisfaction to be found in the possession of that which we most ardently desire.
3°. The glory which follows the victory over the passions is really solid and assured; while nothing but shame and confusion is found in gratifying them.

II

1. *Means of overcoming the passions:*
1°. The *grace of God,* which never fails us, and with which we can conquer them all.
2°. *Christian vigilance,* which will enable us to foresee the occasion of sin.
3°. The *fear of God* and submission to His orders, since He commands us to resist our passions.

2. *Advantages of victory over our passions.* It procures for us,
1°. *Peace of heart* and the *joy of a good conscience;*
2°. *Christian liberty,* which frees us from the slavery of the world, the flesh, and the devil;
3°. The *certainty of an eternal reward.*

CII

FIDELITY IN SMALL THINGS

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." (Eccli. xix, 1)

We should never regard as a small matter that which can please or displease God, which can help or hinder us in the work of our salvation; and yet it often happens that we neglect small things and value great things only, striking virtues, looking on everything that does not shine before men as a trifle. In order that you may fight against and destroy this error, I will show you: I. That we require as much virtue, strength, and courage to persevere in the practice of small things, as to undertake great works and to discharge our most important duties; II. That God is glorified as much by punctuality in small matters as by fidelity in those that are great.

I. WE REQUIRE AS MUCH VIRTUE, STRENGTH, AND COURAGE TO PRACTISE SMALL WORKS CONSTANTLY AS WE DO TO PERFORM OUR MOST IMPORTANT DUTIES

1. In great works we consider the reward, the fruit we shall draw from them; this lessens the difficulty very much, and encourages us to undertake them. But in small things there is nothing like this to urge us on; as they are ordinary matters, vanity is seldom mixed up in them, and our intention is more upright. Moreover, small acts of virtue, being more frequent can, by their number, equal the merit of one great act.

2. The difficulty and toil is not less in the ordinary practice of small things, in which weariness and constraint are continual, than in the greatest works which occur but rarely. It is undoubtedly much easier to make some effort to overcome ourselves on occasions which rarely arise, than to be always exact, always regular, even in the smallest duties, since this regularity requires us to be always overcoming ourselves. In order, then, to be regular and punctual in small matters, we require a stronger and more deeply-rooted virtue.

3. The interior difficulties and trials which we must overcome in the constant practice of small works, require in us a stronger virtue and a firmer will, so that we may not be discouraged at the continuity of exercises which have nothing attractive; that we may overcome the weariness and disrelish that are met with in a regular life; that we may subject ourselves to a thousand things which do not gain us much praise from men, and which do not appear to us to be very meritorious before God; in which thought, however, we deceive ourselves; because in the exercise of the smallest acts we can practise the greatest and noblest virtues.—humility, patience, charity, mortification.

II. WE DO NOT MERIT LESS GLORY BEFORE GOD BY PUNCTUALITY IN SMALL MATTERS THAN BY FIDELITY IN GREAT AFFAIRS

1. We show by this punctuality that we have a high idea of the grandeur of God, since we find our happiness in rendering to Him the smallest services.

2. Nothing that is done for the love of God is small in His eyes. It is even in small things that He tries our fidelity best. It is with Him as with masters in regard to their servants: it is in small matters that masters best recognize the fidelity of those who are in their service. Great duties and signal services cannot be neglected with impunity; while small duties, the little services that are works of supererogation, prove the affection which inspires them.

3. Self-love enters less into small things, we do not seek our own special interest in them; consequently, it is the glory of God and the desire of pleasing Him that induce us to do them, and sustain us in the weariness which usually accompanies them.

"For nothing [that is, for a small work] shalt Thou save them." (Ps. lv, 8)

"Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (Matth. x, 42)

"Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. xxv, 21)

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

"The just please and move God more by small acts than some who do many things. For God does not look to the act, but to the fervor

of the will; and He considers not what is done, but the devotion and good will with which it is accomplished." (S. Ephrem)

A. *Carelessness in small things leads up to the greatest disorders,* (1) by weakening the fear of God in the soul; (2) by lessening the fire of His love; (3) by diminishing the horror which we should have of vice.

"They begin with the smallest things and they rush into the greatest." (S. Bern.)

"Just as a man slips gradually from the smallest vices into the greatest, so he strives to rise by degrees from small virtues to those that are lofty." (S. Isid.)

"He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing." (Eccle. vii, 19)

"Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck." (Cant. iv, 9)

"By slothfulness a building shall be brought down." (Eccle. x, 18)

"Be contented with little instead of much, and thou shalt not hear the reproach of going abroad." (Eccli. xxix, 29)

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater." (Luke xvi, 10)

"Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth." (Jas. iii, 5)

"The small conflicts prove how bravely we can fight in the great battle." (S. Ambr.)

"You have guarded against the great things; what are you doing with regard to the smallest? Are you not afraid of very small things? You have thrown up a mound, see that you are not overwhelmed by the sand." (S. Aug.)

"If we are careless in attending to small duties, we shall be insensibly led astray and shall treat great things rashly." (S. Greg.)

"When the smallest matters are carefully attended to, the power of discipline continues; but when the least excesses are neglected, discipline becomes gradually relaxed." (S. Ambr.)

B. *Carelessness in small things does an injury,* (1) to the wisdom of God, who judges them to be useful, or even necessary for our salvation; (2) to His love, which requires from us sufficient tenderness to cause us not to offend Him in things that appear unimportant; (3) to His holiness, before which the smallest stain is a frightful deformity.

"It becometh us to fulfil all justice." (Matth. iii, 15)

"I do not know whether we can say that any sin which is committed in contempt of God is light." (S. Jerome)

"Fidelity in the smallest duty is the grandest quality." (S. Aug.)

"The kingdom of Heaven is for sale; God has willed that its price should be a cup of cold water." (*Id.*)

"Nothing that is done for God's sake is small; on the contrary, it is great, and of that kind which procures for us Heaven and heavenly rewards." (S. Basil)

"God who seeks for small things, will give the greatest in return." (S. Chrys.)

"God is accustomed to give great things for those that are small. Our Lord is wont to consider not how much is given, but the good will of the giver, and because of this He places a great value on small things." (*Id.*)

"God does not demand from us what is costly and sumptuous; He asks for food and shelter." (*Id.*)

"Our Saviour, desiring His followers to acquire true and perfect sanctity, has ordered them to avoid most carefully the smallest faults, so that the life of a Christian may be as spotless as the pupil of the eye." (Salvian)

Division

1. *Ordinary causes of the neglect of small things:*
1°. The little esteem which we have for what pleases God;
2°. Great sloth in the work of our salvation;
3°. Great tepidity in the service of God.

2. *Effects of this negligence:*
1°. It deprives us of the courage to do great things;
2°. It is the cause of our doing next to nothing for God;
3°. It leads us gradually into great sins.

CIII

GOOD WORKS

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." (Matth. vii, 19)

What is this ill-fated tree which Jesus Christ threatens to have cut down? It is the Christian who is unfruitful in good works. A Christian is indeed like a tree which God has planted in His field, by causing him to be born in the bosom of the true Church. God has cultivated this tree with care; He has therefore a right to expect fruit from it, and it is with justice that He condemns it to be burned if it does not produce any fruit. Let us consider: I. The necessity of good works; II. What are the works which God demands from us.

I. THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS

It is a grave error to believe that in order to be saved it is sufficient to avoid evil; God wishes us not only to avoid evil, but also to perform good works:

"Decline from evil and do good." (Ps. xxxvi, 27)

"Not only to have done evil, but also not to have done good works, deserves condemnation." (S. Aug.)

Let us open the Sacred Scriptures, and we shall there learn: (1) that without good works no one can be saved; (2) that only good works, grounded on faith, can assure to us the possession of Heaven.

1. *No one can be saved without good works*

Every tree that brings not forth good fruit, that is to say, every Christian who neglects good works, who does not do the good works God commands him to do, who is sterile in virtues, will be condemned to the eternal flames of hell. Do we require any further proof of the necessity of good works?

"Either fruit or fire; therefore that he may not be in fire, let him bring forth fruit." (S. Aug.)

What will it avail you to have formed beautiful projects of conversion, to have made the resolution of restoring the property of others, of becoming reconciled with your enemy,—if your resolutions

have no effect? You will be condemned with your fruitless desires and resolutions. The Father of the household has neglected nothing. He has planted you in good soil. He has watered you with the waters of grace in order to make you bring forth fruits worthy of penance; but you have not corresponded with His care. You have languished in a life slothful and fruitless in good works.

"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance . . . For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire." (Luke iii, 8, 9)

"Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii, 7)

"I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and that your fruit should remain." (John xv, 16)

"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away." (John xv, 2)

"It is not enough to abstain from evil; that which is good must be done; and it is a small thing not to injure any one, unless you strive to be useful by good works." (S. Aug.)

How deplorable, then, is the unhappy lot of so many Christians, who are content with the assurance that they commit no evil, that they are not subject to gross vices, that they do not wrong any one, that they are even temperate in their passions; but who omit to do what is good, who do not practise virtues, who neglect good works! Do not rest satisfied with the noble rank of Christian, which you received in Baptism. The faith which you profess will avail you nothing without good works. Faith is a talent given to you by God that you might make it fructify. You are not addicted to gross sins, you say, you are not blasphemers, nor libertines. Be it so; you will not be condemned for these crimes, but you will be condemned for not having done the good works which God demanded of you in the state of life in which He placed you.

"From him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. xxv, 29, 30)

"So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works . . . Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" (Jas. ii, 17, 20, 24)

"Faith without works is dead, as are works without faith." (S. Greg.)

"By their fruits you shall know them. Not every man that saith to Me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father, who is in heaven . . . Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me you that work iniquity." (Matth. vii, 20–23)

"Those who profess to love Christ are known not only from their words, but also from their deeds; for a tree is known by its fruit." (S. Ignat.)

"Faith that does not work, what is it but a lifeless corpse?" (S. Bern.)

We should remark that the omission of good works will be the chief motive that will influence the sentence of condemnation which Christ will pronounce against the reprobate:

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. . . . For I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat," etc. (Matth. xxv, 41)

"At last came also the other virgins [who had not taken oil with them], saying: "Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not." (Matth. xxv, 11, 12)

"Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening." (Eccle. ix, 10)

"We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. v, 10)

2. *Good works, therefore, are the only title that can secure for us an entrance into the inheritance of the Lord*

This is what we can see also in the sentence which Christ will pronounce in favor of the elect:

"Come, ye blessed of My Father. . . . I was hungry and you gave Me to eat," etc. (Matth. xxv, 34 ff.)

"Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. xxv, 21)

"God is not unjust, that He should forget your work." (Heb. vi, 10)

"And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor. iii, 8)

"He will render to every man according to his works." (Rom. ii, 6)

"What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi, 8)

"To him that soweth justice, there is a faithful reward." (Prov. xi, 18)

"If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?" (Gen. iv, 7)

"The Lord will reward me according to my justice." (Ps. xvii, 21)

"By the fruit of his own mouth shall a man be filled with good things, and according to the works of his hands it shall be repaid him." (Prov. xii, 14)

"The work of the just is unto life." (Prov. x, 16)

"Call the laborers and pay them their hire." (Matth. xx, 8)

"Glory and honor and peace to every one that worketh good." (Rom. ii, 10)

"Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works." (Apoc. xxii, 12)

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . . for their works will follow them." (Apoc. xiv, 13)

"Every work becomes light when the reward to be bestowed on it is considered; it is the hope of the reward that makes the work easy." (S. Jerome)

Good works, then, are necessary for you in whatever state you may be: if you are in sin, you should perform good works in order to obtain the grace of conversion, which will help you to blot out your sins and become reconciled to God.

"[Therefore] as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification." (Rom. vi, 19)

If you are free from sin, you should practise good works in order to persevere in the grace of God.

"He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xxii, 11)

II. WHAT ARE THE GOOD WORKS WHICH GOD DEMANDS OF US?

The quality of a tree is known by the fruit it produces. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit. Grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor figs from thistles. A good tree then should produce the fruit that is peculiar to it, that is to say, a Christian should do (1) the works which are suitable to his state of life and which God demands from him, and (2) do them as God wishes them to be done.

1. *We should do the works that are suitable to our state,* that is to say, those which depend on us and to which we are obliged. God

does not demand from us things that are impossible and above our strength. What He does demand is that we should fulfil the duties of the state to which He has called us, according to the talents and graces which He gives us.

Your occupations do not permit you, for example, to pass a part of the day in the church; but you can and should give time to prayer, morning and evening; and during your work you can sometimes raise up your heart to God. Your means do not allow you to give abundant alms to the poor; but you have so many occasions of exercising charity towards your neighbor by rendering some service to those who require your help! Your constitution is not strong enough to allow you to mortify yourself by continual fasts; but at least you can and should observe the commandments of the Church and retrench your food a little at other times in a spirit of penance. You cannot announce the word of God to the people as the ministers of the Gospel do; but you can and should exercise your zeal in the bosom of your family by instructing and correcting your children and your servants.

"Who perseveres in praising God the whole day? I will show you how you can praise Him the entire day, if you wish to do so: do well whatever you do and you have praised God. In the innocence of your works prepare to praise God all the day." (S. Aug.)

Do, then, what depends on you, what God demands of you, and you will be this good tree that bears good fruit.

Do what God demands. Pay attention to this so as not to allow yourselves to be drawn aside by a false devotion. You must apply yourselves to works of precept rather than to those that are only of counsel. Pay your debts before you give alms. You must not neglect essential duties in order to adopt certain practices of piety, which you have prescribed for yourselves of your own free will. In a word you must first of all fulfil the duties that are of obligation.

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all doctors? Are all workers of miracles?" (1 Cor. xii, 29, 30)

"He shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season." (Ps. i, 3)

"Make your ways and your doings good, and I will dwell with you." (Jer. vii, 3)

"I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God." (Mich. vi, 8)

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting." (John vi, 27)

"Brethren, be steadfast, . . . abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv, 58)

"Works have a tongue, they are eloquent, even though the tongue is silent; deeds rather than words are the proof of love." (S. Cyril)

"If any one asserts that he loves another, and confines himself to the mere assertion, the words of such a man are as it were dead." (S. Greg. Nyss.)

"They profess that they know God; but in their works they deny Him." (Tit. i, 16)

2. *It is not enough to perform the good works we are obliged to do, we must do them as God wishes us to do them,* that is, with the intention of pleasing Him. However good an act may otherwise be, it is deprived of an essential condition to entitle it to a reward, if it is not done with the intention of pleasing God. With this good intention the most ordinary acts become great before God; further, actions that are in themselves indifferent, such as eating and drinking, become meritorious. Without such intention the most extraordinary works are without real merit: they resemble the works of the Pharisees.

"They disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matth. vi, 16)

One of the most dangerous artifices made use of by the devil to turn men aside from the way of salvation, is to render their good actions defective, as far as he can do so, by insinuating into them some motive capable of vitiating them, such as human respect, self-interest, vainglory, the esteem of the world. People pray and give alms, but they are pleased that men should know and publish what they do. How many Christians are adorned with a beautiful exterior of virtue, while their souls are covered with sin!

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matth. xxiii, 27, 28)

"They come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matth. vii, 15)

"Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead." (Apoc. iii, 1)

"Their hope is vain, and their labor without fruit, and their words unprofitable. . . . The fruit of good labors is glorious." (Wis. iii, 11, 15)

"He that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God." (John iii, 21)

"All works are virtuous when they are directed to that end, which is Christ." (S. Aug.)

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4)

"Walk whilst you have light, that the darkness overtake you not." (John xii, 35)

"Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." (Matth. vi, 20)

"In doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore whilst we have time, let us work good to all men." (Gal. vi, 9, 10)

"Providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." (Rom. xii, 17)

"That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matth. v, 16)

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." (Ephes. v, 11)

"That you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing: being fruitful in every good work." (Col. i, 10)

"Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i, 10)

Divisions

I

Necessity of good works

1. Because of the precept, both general and particular, by which Christ imposes on us an obligation of doing good works; *general,* by these words: "Unless your justice abound," etc. (Matth. v, 20); *particular,* is there not a precept concerning alms-deeds, charity, the bringing forth of fruits worthy of penance?

2. Necessity of means, that is to say, it is naturally impossible that it should be otherwise, because God has promised eternal happiness only as a reward. But a reward presupposes merit, and merit supposes good works. Further, no one can be saved without the practice of faith, hope, and charity; but these virtues suppose good works, since they cannot be exercised without such works.

II

Faults to be avoided in doing good works

1. We must not put aside the solid virtues and good works that are

prescribed, in order to follow our own will and caprice in the practice of others, in which we very often place our perfection; but we must overcome our passions and exercise charity.

2. We must not apply ourselves to works of supererogation, which are of counsel only, and omit those to which we are indispensably obliged.

3. It is not enough to do that which gives us most pleasure; we must fulfil all our obligations.

4. It is not sufficient to do a few good works; we must do such a number of them that we may not hear the words: "I find not thy works full." (Apoc. iii, 2)

III

Conditions required in good works that they may merit the reward which God has promised

1. They should be performed in a state of grace.

2. They should be done through a motive of pleasing God, of glorifying Him, and of satisfying His justice.

3. They should be referred to God, who has the best part in them by His grace.

IV

Advantages of good works

1. It is by them that we praise and glorify God.
2. They rouse up our neighbor to do similar works.
3. They procure for us treasures of merit for Heaven.
4. They will be our joy at the hour of death.

CIV

RESPECT IN THE CHURCH

"My house is the house of prayer." (Luke xix, 46)

Everywhere else Jesus Christ is shown to us as full of goodness, patience, and meekness. Here He is shown full of a just indignation, driving out with a holy anger those who were profaning the temple. In doing so, He wished to avenge the honor of His Eternal Father, outraged in His own house; but He wished also to teach us; He wished to inspire us with a great horror of the crime of profaning the house of God, and to induce us to conduct ourselves therein with all due respect and devotion. I. The House of God deserves our most profound respect and our most perfect devotion; II. In what this respect and devotion consist.

I. THE HOUSE OF GOD DESERVES OUR MOST PROFOUND RESPECT AND MOST PERFECT DEVOTION

To make ourselves feel the holy reverence due to churches, and to inspire ourselves with a perfect devotion, we must clearly understand what Faith teaches concerning them, and call it to mind whenever we enter a church. What idea should we have of a church? Our Divine Saviour Himself tells us: "My house is the house of prayer." Churches, then, are (1) the houses of God, and (2) are set apart for religious worship.

1. *Our churches are houses of God*

From all time God chose for Himself places in which to be specially honored; and although He deserves our homage everywhere, yet He wishes to receive it in certain places rather than in others, and He receives it more favorably in such places. From the moment that the Lord chose for Himself a people among all nations, He ordered that there should be a place specially consecrated to Him; *e. g.,* the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon. The Christian religion succeeded that of the Jews, and as it spread throughout the world, God wished that churches should be erected to Him in different places. And these churches have been consecrated by the most solemn and venerable ceremonies.

"Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling,

he said: How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." (Gen. xxviii, 16, 17)

"Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. iv, 7)

"If Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built?" (3 Kings viii, 27)

"I have sanctified this house which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever, and My eyes and My heart shall be there always." (3 Kings ix, 3)

"The majesty of the Lord filled the house." (2 Paral. vii, 1)

"The Lord is in His holy temple." (Habac. ii, 20)

"I will fill this house with glory." (Aggeus ii, 8)

"That place is indeed terrible and worthy of all respect, in which the faithful dwell, which the holy angels often visit, and which the Lord Himself honors by His presence." (S. Bern.)

"The Church is not a public hall; it is the abode of angels, the court of Heaven, it is Heaven itself. The Church is Heaven reduced to a small space." (S. Chrys.)

"The Lord is in that place in which not two or three, but very many, persevere in His name." (*Id.*)

2. *Our churches are houses of prayer*

Let us consider why they have been consecrated.

1°. In order to offer in them the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to recognize there the sovereign dominion of God over man, to thank Him for His graces, already given, to appease His justice, and to beseech Him to give us all the help we need.

2°. To sing therein His praises in hymns and canticles and thus give to Him the homage of our tongues, our minds, and our hearts;

3°. To hear therein His divine word.

But the churches are not only the throne of the Most High on earth; they are also for us the gate of Heaven; they are houses of salvation; it is in them we are regenerated in the waters of Baptism, purified in the tribunal of Penance, sanctified at the Eucharistic Table, instructed in the saving truths of the Gospel, edified by the good example of virtuous Christians, finally, filled with graces which the Lord there pours down in abundance. If people reflected seriously on these important truths, they would not be so tepid, so careless, so distracted in these holy places. Should we see such scandals? What! You are not content with offending God in your houses, but you would also offend Him in His own dwelling-place? What an outrage!

"Beware lest thou offer thy holocausts in every place that thou shalt see; but in the place which the Lord shall choose." (Deut. xii, 13, 14)

"What things the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary! . . . They have set fire to Thy sanctuary; they have defiled the dwelling-place of Thy name on the earth." (Ps. lxxiii, 3, 7)

"In the land of the saints he hath done wicked things, and he shall not see the glory of God." (Is. xxvi, 10)

"What is the meaning that My beloved hath wrought much wickedness in My house?" (Jer. xi, 15)

"Son of man, dost thou see, thinkest thou, what these are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should depart far off from My sanctuary?" (Ezech. viii, 6)

"They have done this to Me: they polluted My sanctuary on the same day." (Ezech. xxiii, 38)

"My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." (Matth. xxi, 13)

"Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic." (John ii, 16)

"What! have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God?" (1 Cor. xi, *22*)

"If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." (1 Cor. iii, 17)

"Those who lead evil lives do this; they wish, as far as they can do so, to make the house of God a den of thieves." (S. Aug.)

"Come all together to pray in the same place; let the prayer be common to all, one mind, one hope, spotless love, in the faith of Christ Jesus. Hasten together to the temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Pontiff, Jesus Christ." (S. Ignat.)

"We meet together as an assembly and congregation offering up prayer to God, that with united force we may wrestle with Him in our supplication. This violence God delights in." (Tert.)

"God has placed churches in cities like harbors in the sea, as it were." (S. John Damasc.)

"God, unwilling that worldly traffic, even that which was considered lawful, should be carried on in His house, drove out the merchants; what do we think then the Lord would do if He found any persons brawling, listening to idle stories, giving way to laughter, He who saw in the temple those who were buying victims for the sacrifice and hastened to expel them?" (S. Bede)

"It would not be surprising if lightning was sent down; for those things that are done in the church deserve this punishment." (S. Chrys.)

"Are not the things that are done here more suited to the theatre? O insolence! how could we appease God?" (*Id.*)

"Then, in the first ages of the Church, the houses were churches;

now the church is a house, or rather worse than any house." (*Id.*)

"What do you do, O man? You gaze with curiosity at the beauty of a woman in the church; and you are not terrified at inflicting so great an outrage on the house of God!" (*Id.*)

"The priest stands offering to God the prayer of all; and do you laugh? do you not fear? do you not tremble?" (*Id.*)

"In the law-court there is silence; in the church, clamor." (*Id.*)

"Is there anything more shameful than to have the word of God stifled by noises coming from all sides, than to have sacred things surrounded by those who make a disturbing noise, whereas the gentiles paid reverence to their idols in silence?" (S. Ambr.)

II. IN WHAT THIS RESPECT AND DEVOTION CONSIST

1. *There is nothing more essential than to go to church with holy dispositions.* The great source of unbecoming conduct in church is taking part in religious service without due preparation. How in fact do many people come into the house of God? For what object and in what state? Some through custom and human respect; others in a spirit of curiosity. Begin then by having a pure intention every time you go to the house of the Lord; reanimate your faith, and never fail to call to mind the holiness of the place to which you are going. . . . Remember the advice of the Holy Spirit:

"Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God." (Eccle. iv, 17)

Say with the prophet:

"I will come into Thy house [O Lord]; I will worship towards Thy holy temple in Thy fear." (Ps. v, 8)

"Reverence My sanctuary." (Levit. xxvi, 2)

Nothing defiled can enter Heaven; is it not becoming that no one should have the temerity to bring into the church, where the same God resides, a soiled body, a sinful soul? If then you have had the misfortune to give way to sin, come to the church with a contrite heart, and with the intention of becoming reconciled to the Lord as soon as possible. Take the holy water with respect and make an act of contrition.

"Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exod. iii, 5)

"I will go into Thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay Thee my vows which my lips have uttered." (Ps. lxv, 13)

"We will go into His tabernacle; we will adore in the place where His feet stood." (Ps. cxxxi, 7)

"Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days." (Ps. xcii, 5)

"The fear of God not only induces us to practise religion outwardly, but also disposes our soul to be worthy of making supplication to God, and of obtaining the fruit of our request. It also enables us to appease God by faith and good works." (S. Eucher.)

"You have a church, a Sacrifice that is made perfect, the prayers of the Fathers; you have the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, the memories of the martyrs, a congregation of saints, and many other things that can recall you from your sins to justice." (S. Chrys.)

"All the unclean and infamous flock to the church with hardly any reverence. It is well to go to church; but we should go there to pray, to appease the anger of God; and we should not go from the church into the occasion of sin, to offend God." (Salvian)

2. *But in vain would you come to the church with the most perfect faith, with the most respectful fear, and with the purest heart, if you are not careful to act under the influence of that faith while you remain there.* That faith should manifest itself by the most profound recollection and silence, by the most edifying modesty, by acts of religion best suited to glorify God and to make ourselves worthy of His favors. Never forget this advice of the Apostle:

"Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh." (Philip. iv, 5)

It would be of very little advantage to observe the most edifying exterior modesty, if your minds and hearts are not united to God by interior acts of religion. God is a Spirit, and He wishes to be adored in spirit and in truth. You must therefore banish all voluntary distractions, lest you incur the reproach:

"This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Mark vii, 6)

We should go out of the church in a respectful manner, with feelings of piety and gratitude, and determined to preserve in our hearts the sentiments with which the Lord has inspired us.

"My house is desolate, and you make haste every man to his own house." (Aggeus i, 9)

"My eyes shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place." (2 Paral. vii, 15)

"That Thy eyes may be open upon this house night and day; upon the house of which Thou hast said: My name shall be there: that Thou mayest hearken to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth in this place to Thee." (3 Kings viii, 29)

"Adore ye the Lord in His holy court." (Ps. xxviii, 2)

"One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Ps. xxvi, 4)

"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." (Ps. xxv, 8)

"We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple." (Ps. xlvii, 10)

"We shall be filled with the good things of Thy house; holy is Thy temple." (Ps. lxiv, 5)

"How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii, 2–5)

"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." (Ps. lxviii, 10)

"If they shall pray to Thee in this place, . . . forgive the sins of Thy servants, and teach them the good way, in which they may walk." (2 Paral. vi, 26, 27)

"I will bring them into My holy mount, and will make them joyful in My house of prayer." (Is. lvi, 7)

"Their holocausts and their victims shall please Me upon my altar: for My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." (*Ibid.*)

"Visit the church as you would visit Heaven itself, and do not say or do there anything that savors of earth." (S. Nilus)

"I grieve much for our Christian brethren who wish so to enter the church, as to have the body there, but the heart elsewhere." (S. Aug.)

"They come to the church with one sin, and that venial, and they leave it with many sins." (S. Ambr.)

"They wish to make our religion pagan." (S. Jerome)

"We who sin in matters of religion, mock God under the cloak of religion." (Salvian)

Divisions

I

1. *The profanation of churches is of its own nature an enormous crime*

It is in our churches that God specially dwells; it is in these holy places that He listens more favorably to our prayers; it is in these venerable sanctuaries that he distributes with prodigality His favors and graces: three advantageous prerogatives that aggravate the crime of the profaner. What does the impious profaner do?

1°. He violates the respect due to the Divine Majesty;

2°. He despises God's promises;

3°. He ignores His benefits;

Three outrages that render the crime of profanation very heinous in its nature.

2. The profanation of churches is very baneful in its effects

1°. Because of the hardness of heart into which those who are guilty of such irreverence generally fall;

2°. Because of the evils, even temporal, which these crimes draw down on an entire people.

3°. Because of the injury they do to faith; that is to say, the profaner ruins himself, he ruins others, and he brings religion into disrepute.

II

1. There is *nothing holier than our churches,* because of their consecration, of the Sacraments administered in them, of the august Sacrifice therein offered up, of the divine praises there sung, of the graces and favors received in them, of the word of God preached, and the pardon of sins obtaind in them.

2. There is nothing profaned more scandalously than churches, by the want of reverence shown in them, the conversations that take place, and the sins committed in them.

CV

TRUE AND FALSE VIRTUE

or

TRUE AND FALSE DEVOTION

"By their fruits you shall know them." (Matth. vii, 16)

The Son of God, knowing that false teachers would strive to destroy His doctrine, warned His disciples to beware of false prophets, who deceive people by an appearance of piety, but inwardly are ravening wolves. As it is not always easy to know these false prophets, Christ gives us a mark by which they may be distinguished: "By their fruits you shall know them." By this mark we can not only discern true and false prophets, but also true and false Christians. Let us examine: I. What are the qualities of true virtue; II. What are the defects of that virtue which is only apparent, the virtue of the Pharisee and the hypocrite.

I. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF TRUE VIRTUE?

Whoever wishes to apply himself to the work of his salvation, should not be content with appearing virtuous, he should be so in reality.

"We should cultivate virtue itself, not the appearance of virtue." (Lact.)

But our virtue, to be real, and to help us to gain Heaven, must possess three qualities; it must be (1) sincere and entire, (2) humble, (3) constant and persevering.

1. *It must be sincere*

It is not sufficient that we have a virtuous appearance, the virtue must be interior also; it must spring from the heart, and have its origin and guiding principle in charity.

"Whatever is commanded is established in charity alone." (S. Greg.)

It is not enough to practise a certain virtue for which we have an inclination; we must practise all virtues. You say you are not a

miser, not a libertine; but you cherish a hatred against your neighbor; hence your virtue is not entire, not perfect.

"[I beseech you, brethren] that you may abound in every good work." (2 Cor. ix, 8)

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (Jas. ii, 10)

"That you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." (Jas. i, 4)

"All the glory of the king's daughter is within." (Ps. xliv, 14)

"The law of his God is in his heart." (Ps. xxxvi, 31)

"Thy law in the midst of my heart." (Ps. xxxix, 9)

"The Lord beholdeth the heart." (1 Kings xvi, 7)

"The hour cometh . . . when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. God is a spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv, 23, 24)

"There is no one so foolish as to believe that he complies with the law of God by doing outwardly with the hands those things which God commands, unless such things are done at the same time in the heart." (S. Aug.)

"What is worship of Him, but love of Him?" (*Id.*)

"True piety is true worship of God." (*Id.*)

"Devotion is the fervor of a good will, which the mind, not wishing to repress, manifests by certain signs." (Cassian)

"First comes the virtue of devotion, the foundation of the rest, and deservedly required by God of Abraham." (S. Ambr.)

"Spiritual sweetness renders carnal pleasures insipid. The pleasures of earth become tasteless to him who has tasted those of Heaven. He whose heart is fixed on eternal joys despises all transitory things." (S. Bern.)

2. *Our virtue should be humble and without ostentation.*

We should edify our neighbors by our good example. "That they may glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (Matth. v, 16): but we must not do our good works before men for the purpose of being seen, praised, and applauded by them. Let your good works appear in public, but let your intention remain secret.

"But let the work so appear in public that the intention may remain hidden." (S. Greg.)

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in Heaven. Therefore, when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a

trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do . . . that they may be honored by men: Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matth. vi, 1, 2)

"Let not the foot of pride come to me, and let not the hand of the sinner move me." (Ps. xxxv, 12)

"Many that were rich cast in much [into the treasury] and there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites . . . and Jesus saith to His disciples: Amen, I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living." (Mark xii, 41–44)

"For Thou art the glory of their strength." (Ps. lxxxviii, 18)

"Without true piety and religion every good quality, however praiseworthy, is infected with pride and dies." (S. Aug.)

"I do not condemn those who chastise their body; but Satan sometimes deceives the imprudent by a thousand stratagems." (S. Cypr.)

3. *It should be constant and persevering*

The third quality of true virtue is perseverance. Let neither promises, nor threats, nor prosperity, nor adversity, have power to turn you aside from the right way. Never relax your efforts; for God will reward those virtues only that will have been solid and persevering.

"My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv, 58)

"He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." (Matth. xxiv, 13)

"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil . . . and thou hast patience, and hast endured for My name, and hast not fainted. But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place." (Apoc. ii, 2–5)

"I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." (Ps. cxviii, 32)

"Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart." (Eccli. i, 18)

"Godliness is profitable to all things." (1 Tim. iv, 8)

"The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day." (Prov. iv, 18)

II. DEFECTS OF VIRTUE WHICH IS ONLY APPARENT

Notice in the virtue of the Pharisees three defects, which are opposed to the qualities we have assigned to true virtue: (1) It was not real, but only exterior; (2) it was not humble, but full of pride and ostentation; (3) it was not constant and uniform, but a thing of fancy and caprice. Let us see if our virtue is not subject to these same defects.

1. *The virtue of the Pharisees was purely exterior*

They gave all their care to the outward appearance and did not trouble themselves about their dispositions.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matth. xxiii, *27*, 28)

"Son of man, dost thou see, thinkest thou, what these are doing? . . . Dig in the wall . . . go in and see the wicked abominations." (Ezech. viii, 6–9)

Is not our virtue of this character? Our exterior is indeed composed, but do our interior dispositions correspond to our exterior appearance?

"This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matth. xv, 8)

"Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, . . . having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Tim. iii, 2, 5)

"It is indeed a monstrous thing to have the beauty of a dove and the mind of a dog; to be a lamb in mildness of profession, to be interiorly a wolf, to be a Nero at heart, and to appear as a Cato. Thus it can well be said that a new monster, a new beast, is formed out of opposite and different natures." (S. Jerome)

"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition?" (Matth. xv, 3)

"Some carry their devotion in their books only, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me on their lips, but very little in their hearts." (*Imit.*, B. 3, c. 4)

2. *The virtue of the Pharisees was full of ostentation*

In their good works they sought only the esteem of men.

"All their works they do for to be seen of men." (Matth. xxiii, 5)

But when people are influenced by such a motive, their piety is only

a proud piety, which is an abomination before God. Nevertheless, is not this Pharisaical piety still found among Christians? Are there not many who are almost always influenced by vain-glory and self-interest in the good works they do? You give alms readily; but if you were not seen by any one, would you give assistance with the same alacrity? In acting through vain-glory or ostentation, you lose the fruit and the reward of your good works; you place your soul in danger, by making a bad use of a means which should help you in the work of your salvation.

"Conflicts of men corrupted in mind . . . supposing gain to be godliness. But godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. vi, 5, 6)

"It is a grave injustice when he who is wicked strives to show that others are wicked also in order that he himself may not appear so bad, because he has shown that others are not saints." (S. Greg.)

"Woe to you Pharisees! . . . You tell what you have given, and I tell what you have stolen; you remember those you have fed, and do not call to mind those you have slain." (S. Aug.)

The virtue of the Pharisees was one of fancy and caprice; it was only their inclination, pride, ambition, or some other human motive, that made them act. Hence that distinction which they made between the great and the unimportant commandments. Hence the false interpretations of the law, which made them say that one might hate one's enemies, that homicide and adultery were forbidden, but that one could indulge without scruple in the thoughts and desires of these vices.

"In vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men." (Matth. xv, 9)

"They walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts." (Is. lxv, 2)

Have your virtues the same source as those of the Pharisees? Do you act through caprice, inclination, and passion? If that is so, your virtues are false virtues, they are useless in the work of your salvation.

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matth. v, 20)

"These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone." (Matth. xxiii, 23)

"It grieves me much that many things which are of importance according to the Sacred Scriptures, are not observed with sufficient care, and are spoken of as of little moment." (S. Aug.)

"This is perfect justice, to have a greater love for the more excellent

things, and a lesser love for those that are not so much to be desired." (*Id.*)

"Whatever you offer is unacceptable, if you neglect that to which you are bound." (S. Bern.)

If your virtue is not entire, interior, humble, and above all, solid, constant, and persevering:

"Your strength shall be as the ashes of tow, and your work as a spark; and both shall burn together, and there shall be none to quench it." (Is. i, 31)

"They [the just] shall go from virtue to virtue." (Ps. lxxxiii, 8)

"He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xxii, 11)

"How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee." (Ps. xxx, 20)

"They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv, 9)

Divisions

I

Qualities of True Piety:

The piety of the Pharisees was a false piety; ours should be solid and real. In order to be solid and real, our piety should be, (1) entire, (2) disinterested, (3) interior.

1. Our piety should be *entire,* that is, it should include all things, both great and small, all precepts, both general and particular.

2. It should be *disinterested.* The Pharisees were guided in their simulated piety by two kinds of interests: they desired to be honored and to be abundantly provided with everything that could contribute to the comforts of life. But this mercenary and selfish piety is criminal in the sight of God, and hateful to men.

3. It should be *interior.* The piety of the Pharisees was only a superficial piety, showing itself in the face and on the lips, but having no place in the heart. It is the heart which God demands from man; and except the heart, what is there in man that is worthy of God?

II

The *virtue of the Pharisees* was not entire, it was only a divided virtue; their virtue was not interior, it was only apparent: two defects which caused Christ to condemn it, and which, alas! are found only too often in the virtue of many Christians.

Virtue, then, in order to be real, should be (1) entire, (2) interior. Entire, in order to fulfil the whole law, interior, in order to observe the spirit of the law.

III

1. *Devotion* (virtue) is not real if it is not in the heart. This truth is unquestionable: "They must adore Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv, 24). Without that, it is dissimulation and hypocrisy, which are abominable in the sight of God.

2. Devotion is not really in the heart if it is not manifested by exterior worship, if we do not acquit ourselves outwardly of the duties and practices of piety, to which Religion obliges us.

3. Devotion is neither pleasing to God nor edifying to our neighbor if it is not proportioned to our state and condition of life.

CVI

FALSE CONSCIENCE

"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. v, 21)

The Apostles, preaching the truths which the Holy Ghost had taught them, purified the world from its errors, banished its idolatry, and reformed its morals. We have received through the Apostles that holy religion, that pure morality; but if religion is preserved among us in its integrity, has not morality lost much of its purity in the heart of man? But this disorder has come only from the false conscience which men have made for themselves, and which they still make every day regarding the principles of Christian morality. I. What is the source of a false conscience? II. What are the remedies for it?

I. THE SOURCES OF A FALSE CONSCIENCE?

Conscience, which, S. Thomas says, is the science of the heart, is an interior light that shows us the good to be done or the evil to be avoided in certain circumstances. Conscience is, as it were, an application which each one makes to himself of the law of God, in order to learn what is permitted or forbidden by this divine law. It is therefore necessary that this application of the law should be just, and that it should be made with judgment and prudence. We are not permitted to act against conscience.

"He that discerneth, if he eat, is condemned; because not of faith. For all that is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv, 23)

It is not, however, lawful to follow every kind of conscience, for there are false consciences.

"There is a way that seemeth to a man right; and the ends thereof lead to death." (Prov. xvi, 25)

But it is necessary to find out the source of this false conscience, so as to avoid its dangers and perils. The ordinary sources of false conscience are: (1) the errors of the mind, (2) the passions of the heart, (3) the customs and usages of the world.

1. *Errors of the mind*

If scrupulous persons sometimes believe that a thing which is really

forbidden, is permitted, their error cannot be voluntary, nor liable to punishment.

"If you were blind, you should not have sin." (John ix, 41)

"If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God." (1 John iii, 21)

But how many Christians there are with a lax conscience—a conscience that comes from an error into which they voluntarily fall, from culpable ignorance, from false principles which people make for themselves!

There are, it is true, sinners who offend God through pure malice and without remorse. But how many more are there who, because of a false conscience, believe many things to be permitted which are in reality forbidden! How many who evade being instructed in their duties lest they should have to fulfil them! How many who do not wish to remove certain well-founded doubts, through fear of being obliged to discharge an obligation which puts a restraint on their liberty, to make restitution which would cause them inconvenience.

"He would not understand that he might do well." (Ps. xxxv, 4)

"Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job xxi, 14)

"The gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts." (Rom. ii, 15)

"So that they are inexcusable." (Rom. i, 20)

"Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting, have made shipwreck concerning the faith." (1 Tim. i, 19)

"Let no man pretend that he neglects virtue in ignorance, for he has a sufficient teacher in conscience." (S. Chrys.)

2. The passions of the heart

The strong uncontrolled feelings of the heart produce numberless errors in questions of morality and also of faith. From the moment that a man's feelings carry him away, he always decides in his own favor. Thus, envy or revenge covers itself with the cloak of zeal, in order to ruin an enemy; pleasure causes a man to consider as innocent all sinful indulgences; the fear of putting himself to inconvenience makes him break the laws of the Church, fasting and abstinence; covetousness renders him hard towards the poor, and unjust, on the pretext of prudence or economy for the future.

"There is no one who, when engaged in evil, thinks there is good in it, but he contrives the occasions; yet although he may explain away his crime by words, still he can never escape from his conscience." (S. Chrys.)

3. *Worldly customs and usages*

Into what errors does not a false conscience, strengthened by custom and usage, cause people to fall? We must live in the world, they say, and therefore we must adopt its customs. Society requires us to avoid singularity; why should we not do what others do? Hence they do not scruple to pass their time in idleness, in plays, in pleasure-parties, because they see many others acting in the same way.

"They were mingled among the heathens, and learned their works, . . . and it became a stumbling-block to them." (Ps. cv, 35)

"In process of time, wicked custom prevailing, this error was kept as a law." (Wis. xiv, 16)

"The laws of people are vain." (Jer. x, 3)

"You have made void the commandments of God for your tradition." (Matth. xv, 6)

"Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." (Jas. iv, 4)

"Custom without truth is the old age of error; therefore, having abandoned error, let us conform to truth." (S. Cypr.)

"When sins, however great and foul they may be, become habitual, they are considered as of little or no importance." (S. Aug.)

"Woe to you, flood of human custom! Who withstands you? How long will you not be dried up? (*Id.*)

"You attend to what another does, not to what God orders you to do; you judge yourself in comparison with the life of one who is worse, not with that of one who is better." (S. Bern.)

I. WHAT ARE THE REMEDIES FOR A FALSE CONSCIENCE?

Since error, passion, and custom are the sources of false conscience, let us oppose: (1) to error, the lamp of a conscience upright and enlightened; (2) to passion, a sincere desire to please God and to observe His holy law; (3) to worldly custom, the example of good and pious people.

1. *Conscience is as the eye of our soul, in as much as it makes us see the good we should do and the evil we should avoid*

"If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness, the darkness itself how great shall it be?" (Matth. vi, 22, 23)

"Take heed that the light which is in thee, be not darkness." (Luke xi, 35)

In order, therefore, to avoid the errors of a false conscience you must seek the light which directs your steps in the way of salvation.

"In all thy works let the true word go before thee, and steady counsel before every action." (Eccli. xxxvii, 20)

Following the example of the Royal Prophet we must beg of God:

"Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths." (Ps. xxiv, 4)

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths." (Ps. cxviii, 105)

"As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee." (2 Paral. xx, 12)

After having besought God to enlighten you, consult your faith, read the Gospel. Call to mind its maxims on all occasions when there is question of deciding how to act. An erroneous conscience tells you, for example, that under certain pretexts you can maintain an intimacy with some one who is dear or useful to you. But the Gospel tells you:

"If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." (Matth. xviii, 9)

The passion for worldly goods tells you that you can acquire them by means which appear legitimate to you, but which the law condemns. Remember the words of the Gospel:

"Blessed are the poor." (Matth. v, 3)

"Woe to you that are rich." (Luke vi, 24)

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. xvi, 26)

The passion of revenge tells you that you are bound in honor to obtain satisfaction for an insult. But what does the Gospel tell you?

"If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." (Matth. v, 23, 24)

"Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." (Matth. vi, 12)

"To no man rendering evil for evil." (Rom. xii, 17)

Faith,—the Gospel,—behold the lamp that should enlighten us. But as we can deceive ourselves even in the application which we should make of the maxims taught us by Faith, it is well to consult experienced men, enlightened in the ways of God and of holy life, men of safe, and not loose principles.

"Lean not upon thy own prudence." (Prov. iii, 5)

"Thus saith the Lord: Stand you on the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk ye in it." (Jer. vi, 16)

"By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." (Prov. xvi, 6)

2. *When you have taken all these precautions, to form your conscience according to the maxims of Faith, make a firm and sincere resolution to observe the law of God, to sacrifice your pleasures and your interests to this divine law, to avoid everything that has even the appearance of evil*

"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves." (1 Thess. v, 21, 22)

"It is characteristic of pure hearts to perceive faults where there are none." (S. Greg.)

Then you will take the better part in the things which you doubt are permitted or forbidden. You will take the surest part, remembering that:

"No security is too great when eternity is at stake." (S. Greg.)

Ah! how powerful is the thought of eternity in influencing us to observe the law of God rather than give way to our passions! Strengthen yourselves, then, with this salutary thought, when you have to decide, and when you doubt whether the action is good or bad, act as if you were to die after having done it. Say to yourselves with a great saint:

"What bearing has this on eternity? If you were to die immediately, would you do this?"

"In every work of thine regard thy soul in faith: for this is the keeping of the commandments." (Eccli. xxxii, 27)

Fear lest you be obliged to say at the moment of death:

"Therefore we have erred from the way of truth." (Wis. v, 6)

"Who is more dead than he who carries fire in his bosom, sin in his conscience, and neither feels it, nor shakes it off, nor trembles with fear?" (S. Bern.)

3. *After having banished error from your mind and passion from your heart, instead of going with the stream of custom, by which you so rashly justify yourselves in order to tranquillize your conscience, imitate pious people, and take the example of the saints as your model*

See what they did, what virtues they practised. They walked in the narrow way, they shunned the broad and easy road that leads to eternal ruin. Avoid this road as they did. You hope for the same reward, you should fear the same chastisement; and therefore you should take the same precautions to merit the one and to avoid the other. Remember that the world has been condemned by Jesus Christ,

that the maxims of Christ are opposed to those of the world. It is not a safe rule, then, to follow worldly maxims.

"Can you not do what the saints have done?" (S. Aug.)

"I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." (John xiii, 15)

"Make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount." (Heb. viii, 5)

"Christ called Himself the truth, not the custom." (Tert.)

"Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou yield in judgment to the opinion of the most part, to stray from the truth." (Exod. xxiii, 2)

"Be not conformed to this world." (Rom. xii, 2)

"We have no such custom nor the church of God." (1 Cor. xi, 16)

"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. i, 10)

"Who shall rise up for me against the evil-doers? Or who shall stand with me against the workers of iniquity?" (Ps. xciii, 16)

"Are the sins of others your virtues? Will it console you in your misery to have many others like yourself?" (S. Jerome)

"Live with the few and you will merit to be found with the few in the kingdom of God." (Cassian)

"Let not the crowd of careless people persuade us to lead careless lives, and let not the errors of others lead us to lose our souls." (S. Eucher.)

Division

1. *A false conscience is easily formed.*

In order to act we must form our conscience, and everything that is not according to conscience is sin." "All that is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv, 23). But it does not follow that everything which is according to conscience is free from sin, because there is a conscience that is not right, a false conscience. It is very easy to form such a conscience, (1) in all conditions of life, because of depraved human nature, (2) particularly in the more exalted positions, because of certain interests that are difficult to reconcile with the law of God.

2. *It is dangerous to follow a false conscience.*

Every error is dangerous, especially in matters of morality; but there is none more full of danger than that which is attached to the rule itself of morality, which is conscience, because with a false conscience,

1°. One commits all kinds of sins;

2°. One commits sin boldly and tranquilly;

3°. One commits it, in some sense, without being able to avoid doing so, and without hope of a remedy.

3. *False conscience is a vain excuse for justifying oneself before God.*

If our errors were involuntary and in good faith, we could avail ourselves of a false conscience as a lawful excuse. But I maintain that ignorance, and consequently false conscience, is one of the most frivolous pretexts:

1°. Because there is now so much light, so much instruction, that we cannot suppose there could exist a conscience in error, and at the same time in good faith;

2°. Because there is no false conscience which God may not forthwith confound by another upright conscience, which rests in us, or which, although outside of us, rises up against us and in spite of us.

CVII

A GOOD CONSCIENCE

I. THERE IS NOTHING THAT BRINGS MORE HAPPINESS AND CONSOLATION THAN THE PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments." (Ps. cxi, 1)

"A secure mind is like a continual feast." (Prov. xv, 15)

"The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread." (Prov. xxviii, 1)

"Riches are good to him that hath no sin in his conscience." (Eccli. xiii, 30)

"There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart." (Eccli. xxx, 16)

"Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." (*2* Cor. i, 12)

"A good conscience does not seek to avoid the eyes of any one." (S. Greg.)

"Happy the conscience which, in the time of affliction, remembers good works." (S. Jerome)

"So great is the splendor of virtue, that peace of conscience and security of innocence make life happy." (S. Ambr.)

"You will find truer and more pleasing joys in a good conscience in the midst of troubles, than in a bad conscience in the midst of delights." (S. Aug.)

"The approbation of him who praises does not heal a bad conscience, nor does reproach wound a good one." (*Id.*)

"What is more pleasing than a good conscience? which if it were bad instead of being good, would cause affliction, and make all things bitter." (*Id.*)

"O blessed purity of conscience! O sweet delight of a holy conscience!" (S. Bern.)

"A good conscience is great wealth. In reality what is there grander or more pleasing? What more peaceful or secure on earth? A good conscience fears neither the loss of goods, nor insulting words, nor bodily suffering. (*Id.*)

"A good conscience will be without fear when the body dies; without fear, when the soul is presented before God; without fear, when

both body and soul are placed before the dread tribunal of the just Judge on the last day." (*Id.*)

"The opinion of good men along with the testimony of conscience is sufficient against those who speak evil." (*Id.*)

"He whom conscience does not torment reposes in peace in his house." (Richard of S. Victor)

"If there be joy in this world, certainly the man whose heart is pure possesses it." (*Imit.*, B. 2, c. 4)

"Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have gladness. A good conscience can bear very much, and is exceeding joyful in the midst of adversity. . . . Sweetly wilt thou rest if thy heart blame thee not." (*Imit.*, B. 2, c. 6)

"As virtue itself is a reward for us, so profligacy is the punishment of the wicked." (Boethius.)

II. THERE IS NOTHING MORE BITTER AND INSUPPORTABLE THAN THE REPROACHES, THE REMORSE, AND THE TORMENT OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE

"Thou shalt fear night and day. . . . In the morning thou shalt say: Who will grant me evening? and at evening: Who will grant me morning? for the fearfulness of thy heart wherewith thou shalt be terrified." (Deut. xxviii, 66, 67)

"I will send fear in their hearts. . . . The sound of a flying leaf shall terrify them, and they shall flee as it were from the sword." (Levit. xxvi, 36)

"Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; I am turned in my anguish while the thorn is fastened." (Ps. xxxi, 4)

"For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me." (Ps. l, 5)

"There is no peace in my bones because of my sins." (Ps. xxxvii, 4)

"For the Lord will give thee a fearful heart, and languishing eyes, and a soul consumed with pensiveness." (Deut. xxviii, 65)

"Whereas wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its condemnation; for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things." (Wis. xvii, 10)

"The sound of dread is always in his ears; and when there is peace he always suspecteth treason." (Job xv, 21)

"Thy own wickedness shall reprove thee, and thy apostacy shall rebuke thee." (Jer. ii, 19)

"Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." (Rom. ii, 9)

"The evil-doer can escape from the judgment of men, but not from that of conscience." (S. Greg.)

"What will it profit you if all praise you, but your conscience accuses you? Or what harm will it do you if all speak against you, and your conscience alone defends you?" (*Id.*)

"No one can commit a sin with impunity, since the guilt itself is the punishment." (S. Jerome)

"What punishment is graver than the wound of conscience? Is not this more to be avoided than loss of fortune, exile, sorrow, sickness, death?" (S. Ambr.)

"What judgment is stricter than that of one's conscience, in which each one is both accused and accuser? He who is displeased with himself has all things opposed to him; he both accuses and bears witness against himself; and he who oppresses and torments himself finds no means of escape. (*Id.*)

"Thou hast decreed, O Lord, that every inordinate affection should be itself a punishment, and so it is." (S. Aug.)

"Every evil-minded man is an evil to himself; he must needs be tormented; he is a torment to himself; he whom his conscience torments is his own punishment." (*Id.*)

"O man, you can avoid whatever you wish except your own conscience; you have no more inward place to which to fly from your conscience if your sins cause you remorse." (*Id.*)

"The tribunal of the Judge is in your heart: God sits there, and there are present the accusing conscience, the executioner, fear." (*Id.*)

"What the sinner suffers here is the beginning of the divine vengeance." (*Id.*)

"Just as no one can fly from himself, so neither can he escape the sentence of his interior court." (S. Chrys.)

"This tribunal is not bribed by money, nor satisfied with flattery; because it is divine, and is imposed by God on our necks." (*Id.*)

"The sinner carries his conscience around with him like an executioner, continually gnawing and scourging him. God fixes it in the mind ever watchful and on the alert. Condemned by his own judgment of himself he trembles at everything, his shadow, the walls, the very stones speak to him." (*Id.*)

"A guilty conscience is a certain hell and a prison of the soul." (S. Bern.)

"As a river, wherever it flows, pierces through the ground, so a bad conscience does not cease gnawing in secret." (*Id.*)

"Conscience demands an account of the past, objects to the present, and takes precautions against the future." (S. Bonav.)

"There is no punishment graver than that of conscience. Do you

wish never to be sad? Lead a good life. A peaceful mind checks sadness; a good life has unceasing joy; but a bad conscience is always in pain." (S. Isid.)

"A bad conscience is always timid and uneasy. . . . The wicked have never true gladness, nor feel peace within; because there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord." (*Imit.*, B. 2, c. 6)

"Return, ye transgressors, to the heart." (Is. xlvi, 8)

CVIII

HYPOCRISY

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." (Matth. xxiii, 23)

Could not this reproach of hypocrisy which the Saviour addressed to the Pharisees, be made with justice to a great number of Christians? Hypocrisy is falsehood in action: a man who is not virtuous wishes to appear as if he were. This vice is very common in the world. "Although we may be free from other vices, yet there are few or none who are not stained with hypocrisy." (S. Jerome). I. Hypocrisy is a most abominable vice in the sight of God; II. Hypocrisy is a vice that is most injurious to salvation.

I. HYPOCRISY IS A MOST ABOMINABLE VICE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

The Holy Ghost teaches us in Sacred Scripture that God hates hypocrites; that nothing thrives well with the deceitful. He fulminates maledictions against him who is double-hearted, two-faced:

"Every mocker is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. iii, 32)

"No hypocrite shall come before His presence." (Job xiii, 16)

"Dissemblers and crafty men prove the wrath of God." (Job xxxvi, 13)

"The hope of the hypocrite shall perish; his folly shall not please him, and his trust shall be like the spider's web." (Job viii, 13, 14)

"The congregation of the hypocrite is barren." (Job xv, 34)

"The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." (Job xx, 5)

"Woe to them that are of a double heart, and to wicked lips, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways." (Eccli. ii, 14)

"No good shall come to the deceitful son." (Prov. xiv, 15)

"They have spoken vain things every one to his neighbor; with deceitful lips and with a double heart have they spoken. May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." (Ps. xi, 3, 4)

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of Heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter

in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter." (Matth. xxiii, 13)

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment." (*Ibid.*, 14)

"You are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is high to men is an abomination before God." (Luke xvi, 15)

"The Lord of that [wicked] servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. xxiv, 50, 51)

"Feigning long prayer: these shall receive greater damnation." (Luke xx, 47)

Let us not be astonished at the maledictions pronounced against hypocrites; for there is no opposition stronger than that which exists between God and the vice of hypocrisy. There are in God three kinds of truth: (1) the truth of being; He is not only truth itself, but also the rule and source of all truth; (2) the truth of knowledge; it is not enough to say that He knows all truth, if we do not add that all truth is such only because He judges and knows it to be so; (3) the truth of speech; He gives an assured and unchangeable testimony of all things. These things can be only as God sees them, and God can reveal them to us only as He knows them. But this truth, which is in God, is one of the perfections which He wishes us to imitate most, and one of which He will demand an account:

"The Lord will require truth." (Ps. xxx, 24)

"[Therefore] serve the Lord in truth." (Tob. xiv, 10)

"Let not truth leave thee . . . and write it in the tablets of thy heart." (Prov. iii, 3)

"I know thy works that thou hast the name of being alive; and thou art dead." (Apoc. iii, 1)

There must then be three kinds of truth in the heart of man:

1. *A truth of life,* by which he labors to acquire full and perfect virtues, by doing what he ought to do, and by making himself what he ought to be with regard to God. But what is more opposed to this character of truth than hypocrisy, which adorns the exterior only, and neglects the heart?

2. *A truth of justice,* which consists in a sincerity, a rectitude of heart, that makes him give to his neighbor what the law requires him to give. But what is more opposed to such truth than the habitual care of the hypocrite to deceive his neighbor by a beautiful outward appearance?

3. *A truth of testimony and speech,* which consists in a man showing himself in his words and deeds such as he is, in living up to his profession, and in referring all his works to God. But what can be more opposed to truth of this kind than the hateful affectation of the hypocrite to do all things in order to please men and to be praised by them. Is it possible that God should not have a horror of dispositions and conduct so hateful?

"The living body becomes the tomb of the dead soul." (S. Peter Chrys.)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness." (Matth. xxiii, 25)

"Simulated justice is not justice, but a twofold injustice, because it is injustice and hypocrisy." (S. Aug.)

"They say and do not . . . And all their works they do for to be seen of men." (Matth. xxiii, 3 & 5)

"You are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness." (Matth. xxiii, 27)

"Come not to Him [the Lord] with a double heart. Be not a hypocrite in the sight of men, and let not thy lips be a stumbling-block to thee." (Eccli. i, 36)

"There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit." (Eccli. xix, 23)

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matth. vii, 15)

"Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid." (2 Tim. iii, 5)

"Where hypocrisy is, there is deceit." (S. Aug.)

"Hypocrites are called pretenders because they do not seek to be just, but only wish to seem to be." (*Id.*)

"Whoever wishes to seem to be what he is not, is a hypocrite." (*Id.*)

"It is a great thing to be a Christian, not merely to seem to be one." (S. Jerome.)

"The hypocrite in all his virtues does not hope to gain anything but the esteem of men, the glory of praise from his betters, to be called a saint by all." (S. Greg.)

"The soul is doubly guilty if it neglects to practise virtue that gives it spiritual life, and strives after the appearance of virtue, under which it secretly lives in sin." (S. Prosper)

"They wish to appear virtuous, not to be so in reality. They say great things, but do not do even small things." (*Id.*)

"They condemn in public those very things which they themselves do in secret." (Salvian)

"You cannot easily avoid hypocrites, as their depravity, beautified and adorned, lies deeply hidden under the appearance of virtue." (S. Basil)

"A hypocrite is said to be an actor, who assumes the character of another person on the stage." (*Id.*)

"A hypocrite shows outwardly that which he does not in reality possess." (S. Greg.)

"Hypocrites are sheep in appearance, but are in reality beasts of prey; they are those who wish to appear good, but not to be so; not to appear wicked but to be so in reality." (S. Bern.)

"Vice that is public is less injurious; and a good man is never deceived except by the appearance of virtue." (*Id.*)

"Nothing destroys virtue so much as simulated virtue; for one flies from and avoids open wickedness as wickedness; but when wickedness is concealed under the appearance of virtue, it is not known nor guarded against, but is received as if it was virtue." (S. Chrys.)

"The hypocrite does not wish to be virtuous, but only to appear so; the virtuous man, on the contrary, avoids appearing to be what he is not." (S. Greg.)

"The hypocrite knows how to conceal carefully what he is, and to seem to be what he is not; he conceals real vices and displays false virtues; and he pretends to shun honor so as to be more honored; for, as he sees he cannot gain it by openly seeking it, he takes care to obtain it, by pretending to shun it." (*Id.*)

II. HYPOCRISY IS A VICE THAT IS MOST INJURIOUS TO SALVATION

To convince you of the truth of this I will explain three of the principal effects of hypocrisy: (1) it destroys true piety; (2) it destroys the merit of all good works; (3) it usually leads to eternal ruin.

1. *Hypocrisy destroys true piety*

True piety ought to be entire, interior, perfect, and humble.

"That ye may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix, 8)

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them." (Matth. vi, 1)

But what is more opposed to these marks of true piety than hypocrisy? In fact, hypocrisy has only the appearance of piety, not the reality; it applies itself to the practice of trifles and neglects what is

essential; it does all its works in obedience to passion, to please men, and to attract their esteem.

"Its exterior is beautiful, but its interior is foul." (S. Aug.)

"As it is almost the highest virtue not to deceive any one, so to deceive all is the lowest vice." (*Id.*)

"Comparing the two evils, it is a lighter evil to sin openly than to counterfeit and feign virtue." (S. Jerome)

"It is certain that true virtue has nothing simulated or counterfeit." (S. Ambr.)

"The hypocrite makes for himself a vice of virtue, falsehood of truth, a sin of forgiveness." (S. Peter Chrys.)

"As a woman who is destitute of beauty is accustomed to resort to colors, pigments, and rouge; so the hypocrite who does not possess the beauty of true and solid virtue, assumes a certain external counterfeit piety, by which he retains the esteem of those who are caught by the false show of virtue." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"The hypocrite has a beautiful exterior, but a foul heart; he is a lover of vain-glory; he has the language of the saints, but not their virtues." (S. Bern.)

"The hypocrite takes away what belongs to others, because he appropriates to himself the praise due to honest men." (S. Greg.)

"Hypocrisy is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden drug, a dissimulation of virtues, the moth of sanctity." (S. Chrys.)

2. *Hypocrisy destroys the merits of good works*

Works, however good they may be, if done for show, for appearance, if they have not God for their principle and motive, cannot merit Heaven. The rich people of the Gospel threw much money into the treasury; and yet Christ did not praise them, because by their large alms they sought only the esteem of men; while He praised the poor widow who placed there only two mites, but who in her alms sought the glory of God. (Mark xii, 41 ff.)

"When you fasted and mourned, . . . did you keep a fast unto Me?" (Zach. vii, 5)

"This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me." (Is. xxix, 13)

"If I give alms in order to be glorified by men, I have received my reward, and am called a mercenary." (S. Jerome.)

3. *Hypocrisy usually leads to eternal ruin*

When a Christian has arrived at that state in which he covers his vices by the false appearance of virtue, he no longer hears the cry of his conscience; intoxicated by vanity and by the false praises bestowed

on him, he forgets the bad state in which he is and dies in his sin with the same assurance as if he were loaded with merits. He causes all that is most holy to turn to his condemnation; he profanes the Sacraments.

"By a cruel art it mutilates virtues by the sharp edge of virtues. A pestilence to be guarded against, which creates diseases out of remedies, turns sanctity into a crime, changes propitiation into guilt." (S. Peter Chrys.)

"In vain will he have disguised his wickedness under the mask of piety; this mask will fall off one day, and he will appear such as he is.

"Depart from Me, you that work iniquity." (Matth. vii, 23)

"Therefore . . . the Lord shall not have mercy . . . for every one is a hypocrite and wicked, and every mouth hath spoken folly." (Is. ix, 17)

"The double dealer uttereth lies." (Prov. xiv, 25)

"A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways." (Jas. i, 8)

"A hypocrite is unlike himself, inwardly he is a Herod, outwardly a John, the whole man untrustworthy." (S. Bern.)

"The hypocrite wishes to know the divine law, but not to do what it commands: he wishes to speak learnedly, but not to live piously." (S. Greg.)

"The flesh is worn away by fasts, the mind is inflated; we cover the body with poor clothes, and by the exalting of the mind we rise above purple; teachers of humility, leaders in pride, we hide the fangs of a wolf under the appearance of a sheep." (*Id.*)

"When hypocrites wish to deceive others, it is permitted by a secret judgment of God that they should then rather deceive themselves interiorly." (*Id.*)

"Who is the more impious, he who professes impiety or he who counterfeits sanctity?" (S. Bern.)

"Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins." (Is. xliii, 24)

"Thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face. Understand these things, you that forget God." (Ps. xlix, 21, 22)

Divisions

I

1. *Unhappiness of hypocrites.*

1°. They have all the pain of virtue without having either its merit or its reward before God.

2°. They think only of pleasing men, whose esteem renders them neither better nor happier, and do not trouble themselves about the judgment of God, who alone can give them perfect happiness.

3°. They do not always succeed in deceiving men; and as that which is counterfeit and simulated cannot impose on all for a long time, their hypocrisy, when discovered, brings on them greater confusion and contempt.

2. *Character of hypocrites.*

1°. They seek only the renown of virtue, and they neglect to acquire virtue itself.

2°. They reject ordinary obligations which would not sufficiently distinguish them from the crowd, and usually affect singularity, which makes them more remarkable.

3°. They have in view their worldly interest only; and if they practise good works, they spoil and corrupt them by their intention.

II

Hypocrisy of others.

1. The libertine is not justified when, in order to strengthen himself in his debauchery, he makes use of the hypocrisy of others.

2. The cowardly Christian is weak and culpable in his weakness, when he is so far disturbed by the hypocrisy of others, as to depart farther from the ways of God.

3. The simple and ignorant Christian is inexcusable before God when he allows himself to be led astray by the hypocrisy of others.

CIX

SICKNESS

"Power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

Sickness is a state of suffering for human nature; man, opposed to his own destruction, bears with pain the sorrows and infirmities that shorten his days. Nevertheless, by the will of God infirmities and sickness become for us the source of true happiness, when we know how to make use of them. Consider: I. The advantages of sickness; II. How to make good use of it.

I. ADVANTAGES OF SICKNESS

A life of suffering has succeeded the happiness which man enjoyed before his fall. Happy still to find in the punishment of his sin a means of atoning for it, and a remedy by which to preserve himself from it! For these are the two advantages which we can draw from sickness. If God affects us He does so, (1) to make us enter into ourselves and atone for our past sins; (2) to prevent us from committing sin again.

"Sickness is salutary for a twofold reason, to warn us not to commit sin, and to prevent us from being injured by the sins we have committed." (S. Aug.)

1. *God wishes to make us enter into ourselves and atone for our sins*

There is nothing more suitable to lead a sinner to repentance than the thought of his last end.

"Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccli. vii, 40)

But when does this remembrance strike one most if not during sickness? When in health we look on death as far off, but sickness announces its approach; and each one can say with the Apostle:

"The time of my dissolution is at hand." (2 Tim. iv, 6)

And with King Ezechias:

"I shall go to the gates of hell." (Is. xxxviii, 10)

What must the sick man do then?

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

What will his feelings then be? What have been yours? What have been your fears when you were sick and the priest of God said to you:

"Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live." (Is. xxxviii, 6)

Sickness, then, is profitable to the sinner because it induces him to make reparation for the sins he has committed by doing penance; it is, moreover, an excellent means of satisfying the justice of God for the punishment due to sin. Sin, even when pardoned, must be punished either in this world or in the next: such is the order established by the justice of God. But sickness can assist the sinner to pay the punishment due to his sins, because it is one of the most severe penances that man can undergo; and moreover, because it is the choice of God Himself, who chastises the sinner according to His adorable will, and in a more certain and profitable manner than the sinner could do. Let us acknowledge the goodness of God, who chastises us in this world in order to spare us in the next . . . because the longest sickness is nothing in comparison with the pains of the next life.

"The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again." (1 Kings ii, 6)

"It was neither herb nor mollifying plaster that healed them, but Thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things. For it is Thou, O Lord, that hast power of life and death, and leadest down to the gates of death, and bringest back again." (Wis. xvi, 12, 13)

"To be born in this body of death is to begin to be sick." (S. Aug.)

2. *God wishes to prevent us from committing sin again*

Sickness, then, is very beneficial in chastising us and enabling us to atone for our sins; it is still more so when it prevents our committing sin. What use do we generally make of health? Alas! It is used mostly to offend God. What does the Lord do to check the disorders that reign among men? He anticipates the evil in its source by depriving of health those who make a bad use of it. How has that sensual man learned the rules of temperance, of which he was before ignorant, if not by the illness that came upon him?

"The beloved grew fat and kicked; he grew fat and thick and gross; he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his Saviour." (Deut. xxxii, 15)

"A grievous sickness maketh the soul sober." (Eccli. xxxi, 2)

God sends sickness, not to destroy the sinner, but to make him enter into himself.

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God; that the Son of God may be glorified by it." (John xi, 4)

"Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." (John v, 14)

"That infirmity was for health, causing more remorse than danger. This is what God says: I will strike, and I will heal. He struck by sickness, he healed by faith." (S. Ambr.)

"If they are in health, they will not be holy." (Salvian)

"Let a joyful soul exult in an afflicted body, as over a conquered adversary." (*Id.*)

If God sends sickness to the just, it is through an effect of His love, to try them, and attach them to Himself.

"Power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii, 13)

"Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." (John xi, 3)

"God knows what is for our good; let us do that only that our hearts may be healed from sins." (S. Aug.)

"Many who have recovered their health become wanton; they who were chaste in sickness become adulterers when restored to health. While sick they injured no one; having recovered their health they attack and oppress the innocent." (*Id.*)

"The sickness of the body is the health of the soul." (S. Greg.)

"The sick are to be advised to meditate on the great benefits of bodily illness, which both blots out the sins committed, and prevents the commission of others." (*Id.*)

"The mortification of the flesh sharpens the activity of the mind, and as the body grows weaker, the soul grows stronger; so that a certain kind of life points out to me that a man is not spiritually strong." (Salvian.)

"You have never, I think, shown yourself more worthy to be the dwelling-place of God; the weakness of your body increases the purity of your heart; by the strength of your mind you have overcome the diseases that conquer your body." (*Id.*)

"A healthy sickness. . . . by divine chastisement softens and humbles the heart." (S. Bern.)

"God, foreseeing that some would commit sin, and wishing to save them, afflicts them with bodily illness lest they should sin; so that it is better for them to be saved through illness than to lose their souls by remaining in health." (*Id.*)

"That is a good illness of the body which brings on the health of the soul." (*Id.*)

"O desirable weakness, which is compensated by the strength of Christ! Who will grant me not only to become weak, but to cease

altogether to be myself, that I may become strong with the strength of the Lord?" (*Id.*)

II. SINCE GOD AFFLICTS MEN WITH SICKNESS EITHER TO MAKE SINNERS ENTER INTO THEMSELVES, OR TO PROVE THE VIRTUE OF THE JUST, WE SHOULD, (1) ACCEPT IT IN A SPIRIT OF PENANCE; (2) BEAR IT WITH PATIENCE AND WITH ENTIRE RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD

1. *We should accept it in a spirit of penance*

What does repentance urge a sinner to do in the time of sickness? It urges him to adopt the quickest and most efficacious means of regaining the grace and friendship of God, by offering up his illness in atonement for the sins he has committed. Therefore at the first appearance of a grave illness he should receive the Sacraments, lest he may not have time to do so later on.

"Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him." (Jas. v, 14, 15)

Those who attend the sick ought to warn them in time.

The sick who defer placing themselves in a state of grace by postponing their reception of the Sacraments, deprive themselves of the merits of their sufferings.

"Have you suffered so great things in vain?" (Gal. iii, 4)

While, if we take care to be reconciled to God:

"That which is momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

The best use, then, which a sinner can make of his sickness, is to offer it to God in atonement for his sins; he will do it with all the more reason since he can very often say to himself:

"We deserve to suffer these things because we have sinned." (Gen. xlii, 21)

"Thou hast corrected man for iniquity." (Ps. xxxviii, 12)

"I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." (Mich. vii, 9)

"I have sinned . . . and I have not received what I have deserved." (Job xxxiii, 27)

Let him say with S. Augustine:

"Here burn, here cut, only spare me in eternity." (S. Aug.)

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled." (Ps. vi, 3)

"From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath chastised me." (Lament. i, 13)

"It is better to burn in the flame of fever than in the fire that punishes sin." (S. Greg.)

"God sends us afflictions, that, as we sinned by the allurements of the body, we may be cleansed by its sufferings, and that our present pain may put an end to the life of sin." (*Ibid.*)

"By a dispensation of Providence it sometimes happens that a long-continued habit of vice is cured by a long sickness." (*Ibid.*)

"Every divine chastisement is either a satisfaction for sin in the present life, or a foretaste of the sufferings of the life to come." (*Ibid.*)

2. We should bear sickness patiently and with resignation

What do you gain by giving way to impatience? Instead of curing you, it increases your sufferings, whilst patience softens their bitterness. In the one case you increase your debts, and change the remedy into poison; in the other, on the contrary, your turn to your profit what appeared to be injurious. In imitation of the Divine Master then say:

"My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matth. xxvi, 39)

"It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight." (1 Kings, iii, 18)

"If we have received good things from the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job ii, 10)

"Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job. (Tob. ii, 12)

"Thou art my God; my lots are in Thy hands." (Ps. xxx, 15, 16)

"Be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from Him is my patience." (Ps. lxi, 6)

"Patience hath a perfect work." (Jas. i, 4)

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix, 15)

"Who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction." (Ps. cii, 3, 4)

"My Son, in thy sickness neglect not thyself, but pray to the Lord, and He shall hear thee." (Eccli. xxxviii, 19)

"He healed many that were troubled with divers diseases." (Mark i, 4)

"Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

"Be content to suffer any affliction, however great, to endure any labor, if only you will be freed from eternal pain." (S. Ambr.)

"It is more perfect to bear adversity bravely and patiently, than to pour out your sweat in doing good works." (S. Bonav.)

"Where there is no patience, there is no wisdom." (S. Aug.)

"The true wisdom of a man is known by his patience in trials; the more unwise therefore any one shows himself to be, the greater proofs he gives of his want of patience." (S. Greg.)

"We can be martyrs without suffering death, if we preserve true patience of soul." (*Id.*)

"When God gives to any one the power to raise the dead to life, He gives less than when He bestows the grace to suffer patiently. For the miracles I would work I would be debtor to God, for my patience in trials Christ is Debtor to me. O wonderful thing! He both bestows on me the gift, and is in debt to me for what He gives." (S. Chrys.)

"What a wonderful thing is patience! It places the mind in a tranquil port, and preserves it from adverse winds and tempestuous waves." (*Id.*)

(Consult chapter cx, on Trials and Sufferings.

DIVISIONS

I

1. *Sickness considered in relation to sinners.*

1°. It makes them enter into themselves;

2°. It is a penance which God in His mercy imposes on them, in order that they may atone for their sins;

3°. It is a sign that God intends to save the sinner.

2. *Sickness considered in relation to the just.*

1°. It is a sign that God loves them: "whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth." (Heb. xii, 6)

2°. It renders Christ present to them: "I am with him in tribulation." (Ps. xc, 15)

3°. It perfects their virtues by patience, humiliation, etc., and causes them to acquire new virtues.

II

1. *Those who are impatient in sickness,*

1°. Commence their hell in this life, in suffering without consolation;

2°. Increase their sins by their impatience, and make of them a cause of condemnation.

2. Those who suffer patiently,

1°. Suffer their Purgatory in this life;

2°. Have the happiness of being made like to Him who for our sake made Himself a Man of sorrows.

3°. Acquire infinite merits by the practise of virtues.

III

What we should do after having recovered health.

1. We should thank God and attribute our cure to His mercy rather than to the medicine of the doctor.

2. We should be faithful to the good resolutions we made during our sickness.

3. We should take precautions against relapsing into sin, which has perhaps been the cause of our sickness.

CX

TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS

"You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi, 20)

Who would have believed that crosses and tribulations should be the lot of the chosen servants of God, while joy and pleasures would be that of the followers of this world? It is, however, a truth, but a truth that contains a great consolation for Christians, since their sorrow is to be changed into joy. You should, then, prefer sufferings and afflictions to all the pleasures which the world can offer you, because of the great advantages they procure for you. I. Advantage of suffering to sinners; II. Advantage of suffering to the just.

I. ADVANTAGE OF SUFFERING TO SINNERS

To begin life in tears, to pass through it in suffering, and to end it in sorrow, such is the lot of man on earth.

"Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." (Job xiv, 1)

But sufferings are of great advantage to sinners, because they serve wonderfully, (1) to withdraw man from sin, (2) to help him to atone for his sin.

1. *Suffering withdraws man from sin*

God deals with us as a loving father, who chastises his children in order to correct them.

"Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth." (Heb. xii, 6)

"Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth; and as a father in the son, He pleaseth Himself." (Prov. iii, 12)

"Such as I love I rebuke and chastise." (Apoc. iii, 19)

What, in reality, is more capable of making a sinner enter into himself than suffering and adversity? While he tastes the sweets of prosperity, he gives himself up to joy and pleasure, he forgets God. Has he wealth? he is either avaricious or prodigal of it. Has he good

health? he makes a bad use of it. What will the Lord do to cure this sinner? He will deprive him of that health which he abuses. He will take his wealth from this miser or that spendthrift. He will take away from that woman the beauty which is the cause of sin to herself and to others. He will take from that father, from that mother, the child who is the object of an inordinate love. What will the sinner thus humbled do? Will he have recourse to creatures? No; adversity will show him their emptiness. Abandoned by creatures on whom he can no longer count, he will, so to say, be forced to have recourse to the Creator.

"Returning to himself he said: I will go to my father." (Luke xv, 17, 18)

"It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications." (Ps. cxviii, 71)

"Thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed, as a young bullock unaccustomed to the yoke . . . For after Thou didst convert me, I did penance." (Jer. xxxi, 18, 19)

But the opposite often happens:

"Thou hast struck them, and they have not grieved; Thou hast bruised them, and they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return." (Jer. v, 3)

"In vain have I struck your children, they have not received correction." (Jer. ii, 30)

"Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem [by afflictions], lest My soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land uninhabited." (Jer. vi, 8)

"Correct me, O Lord, but yet with judgment; and not in Thy fury, lest Thou bring me to nothing." (Jer. x, 24)

"In their affliction they will rise early to Me: Come, and let us return to the Lord." (Os. vi, 1)

"When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned, and came to Him early in the morning." (Ps. lxxvii, 34)

"Fill their faces with shame; and they shall seek Thy name, O Lord." (Ps. lxxxii, 17)

"If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if just, I shall not lift up my head, being filled with affliction and misery." (Job x, 15)

"He hath chastised us for our iniquities; and He will save us for His own mercy." (Tob. xiii, 5)

"We indeed [suffer] justly, for we receive the rewards of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil." (Luke xxiii, 41)

"Do not hope that you will be without suffering, unless perhaps you

think you are disinherited; for He scourges every son whom He receives. Does He scourge every one? Where would you conceal yourself? Every one without exception, there will not be one without suffering. What is the meaning of every one? Do you wish to understand what it means? Even the only-begotten Son (Christ), who was without sin, yet was not without suffering." (S. Aug.)

"The sinful son refuses to suffer, though he sees the sinless Son suffering." (*Id.*)

"You were always mercifully severe, sprinkling all my illicit pleasures with the most bitter vexations." (*Id.*)

2. *Suffering helps sinners to atone for their sins*

The sinner will also find in his sufferings that which will enable him to satisfy God's justice for the punishment due to his sins. There is no one who is not indebted to the divine justice. There is no one to whom the words of the Gospel may not be addressed: "How much dost thou owe?" (Luke xvi, 5). You have, I trust, already made the necessary efforts to recover the grace of God and obtain pardon of your sins; but besides the fact that you do not know whether this pardon has been granted to you or not, does there not remain, after the sin has been pardoned, a punishment which you must undergo in this world or the next? God sends you trials, which last only a little time, to take the place of the pains of Purgatory, which are extreme in their rigor, and often of long duration. Would you not be your own enemy if you did not take advantage of so easy a means of satisfying the justice of God? You cannot give alms because of your poverty; you say you cannot fast or mortify yourself, because of your work, your infirmity. The goodness of God prepares for you in sufferings a means of satisfying His justice. You have only to receive these with resignation. After all, crosses and trials are inevitable, the better part then is to bear them patiently; by doing so you will not suffer more from them; on the contrary patience sweetens their bitterness.

"They must remember how our father Abraham was tempted, and being proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God. So Isaac, so Jacob, so Moses, and all that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations remaining faithful. But they that did not receive the trials with the fear of the Lord, but uttered their impatience and the reproach of their murmuring against the Lord, were destroyed by the destroyer, and perished by serpents. As for us, therefore, let us not revenge ourselves for these things which we suffer, but esteeming these very punishments to be less than our sins

deserve, let us believe that these scourges of the Lord, with which, like servants, we are chastised, have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction." (Judith viii, 22–27)

"I beseech those that shall read this book, that they be not shocked at these calamities, but that they consider the things that happened, not as being for the destruction, but for the correction of our nation." (2 Mach. vi, 12)

"Why do you weep? What you suffer is a remedy, not a punishment; a chastisement, not a condemnation; do not refuse the punishment, if you do not wish to be excluded from the inheritance." (S. Aug.)

"Let man understand that God is a physician, and that tribulation is a remedy by which the soul may be saved, not a punishment by which it is condemned. When submitted to the remedy, you suffer acute pain, you are operated on, you cry out; the surgeon pays no attention to your cries, but considers how to restore you to health." (*Id.*)

"Let a Christian rejoice in adversity; because he is either tried, if a just man, or freed from faults, if a sinner." (*Id.*)

"The cross, therefore, is always ready, and everywhere awaits thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and always shalt thou find thyself. Turn thyself upwards, turn thyself downwards, turn thyself without, turn thyself within thee; and everywhere thou shalt find the cross." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 12)

"With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 12)

"If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently. Without labor we are not on the way to rest, and without fighting we come not to victory. What thou sufferest is but little in comparison of those who have suffered so much. Thou must, then, call to mind the heavier sufferings of others, that thou mayest the more easily bear the very little things thou sufferest." (*Imit.*, B. iii, c. 19)

II. ADVANTAGE OF SUFFERING TO THE JUST

"To them that love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. viii, 28)

All things contribute to the profit of those who love God: the blessings and the troubles of this life. The blessings by the good use which the just make of them; and the troubles by the patience with

which they bear them. But it is in sufferings especially that the just find the surest means of working out their salvation, and find at the same time certain signs of their predestination.

1. Sufferings nourish the faith of the just man; 2. they strengthen his hope; 3. they perfect his charity.

1. *Suffering nourishes his faith*

Faith teaches us to consider ourselves in this world as in a strange country.

"We have not here a lasting city; but we seek one that is to come." (Heb. xiii, 14)

But there is nothing more suitable than sufferings to maintain these salutary thoughts in the mind of the just. The just man is not always the best provided with the goods of this world.

"Whilst the wicked man is proud, the poor man is set on fire." (Ps. x, 2, according to the Hebrew)

"Many are the afflictions of the just." (Ps. xxxiii, 20)

But consider how the just man reasons: I am sure that there is a God, the Rewarder of virtue; He does not reward it in this world, since the earth is covered with briars and thorns; therefore, my kingdom is not of this world; a more solid happiness is reserved for me. Hence his detachment from the world, his ardent desire for Heaven. The just man recognizes the goodness and wisdom of God in the sufferings which God sends to him; he knows that:

"The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii, 14)

In reality, is it the rich, the happy ones of this world, the people of pleasure, who are remarkable for the practice of virtue, for attention to the exercises of religion?

"Unto you it is given, for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him." (Phil. i, 29)

"We sent Timothy . . . to confirm and exhort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved in these tribulations: for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." (1 Thess. iii, 2, 3)

"Think diligently upon Him that endureth such opposition from sinners against Himself." (Heb. xii, 3)

"If you partake of the suffering of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. iv, 13)

"My brethren, count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (Jas. i, 2, 3)

"You shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made

sorrowful in divers temptations, that the trial of your faith [much more precious than gold which is tried by fire] may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i, 6, 7)

"If the mind is directed by a firm intention, it esteems as sweet whatever is bitter in this life, and considers as repose everything that afflicts." (S. Greg.)

"The just man is distinguished from the sinner in this, that the just man in adversity confesses the glory of the omnipotent God, that he is not crushed by his condition, that he does not fall with the fall of his exterior glory." (*Id.*)

2. *Suffering strengthens his hope*

Thus sufferings nourish the faith of the just man; they also strengthen his hope. In fact, it is only by tribulations that Heaven can be gained.

"Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv, 21)

Those only will be predestined who will have forced themselves to become like to the Son of God.

"Those whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His son." (Rom. viii, 29)

"If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross." (Matth. xvi, 24)

"He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matth. x, 38)

"If we suffer we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim. ii, 12)

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

But see what sustains the hope of the just man in his sufferings. Consider what makes him say to himself:

"The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii, 18)

Suffer with joy, then, and think of the reward:

"I beseech thee, my son, look upon Heaven." (2 Mach. vii, 28)

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart." (Ps. xxxiii, 19)

"Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake." (Matth. v, 11)

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Ibid.*, 10)

"Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope." (Rom. v, 3, 4)

"As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound . . . That our hope for you may be made steadfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." (2 Cor. i, 5, 7)

"In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; . . . we are cast down, but we perish not." (2 Cor. iv, 8, 9)

"Blessed be God, . . . who comforteth us in all our tribulation." (2 Cor. i, 3, 4)

"The body does not suffer anything when the soul is in Heaven." (Tert.)

"The cross of Christ is the key of paradise." (S. Chrys.)

"The strength of desires enables us to support toil and sorrow; and no one willingly undertakes to endure what gives him pain, unless it be for that which gives him pleasure." (S. Aug.)

3. *Suffering makes perfect his charity*

Sufferings are also for the just an abundant source of merits and virtues, because of the perfection which they give to charity. In reality, it is in sufferings that virtue is made known, made strong and perfect:

"Power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

There are, it is true, those who attach themselves to God in prosperity, who, like David, vow an inviolable fidelity to Him:

"In my abundance I said: I shall never be moved." (Ps. xxix, 7)

But how rare that is! How insecure is the foundation on which rests the virtue that has not been tried in adversity! But if we love God only as long as He gives us what we want, and if we cease to love Him when He ceases to be favorable to our desires, we no longer love Him for Himself, as He wishes to be loved.

The just man, while suffering, can say to God:

"Thou hast proved my heart, and visited it by night, Thou hast tried me by fire [of tribulation]; and iniquity hath not been found in me." (Ps. xvi, 3)

"Many waters cannot quench charity." (Cant. viii, 7)

To love God in suffering and in spite of adversity is the effect of a heroic and perfect virtue; it is to follow the example of the holy man, Job, whose virtue never appeared brighter than in tribulation. God said to Satan:

"Has thou considered My servant, Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and fearing God, and avoiding

evil? And Satan answering, said: Doth Job fear God in vain? Hast not Thou made a fence for him? . . . But stretch forth Thy hand a little, and touch all that he hath, and see if he blesseth Thee not to Thy face. Then the Lord said to Satan: Behold, all that he hath is in thy hand . . . Then Job [afflicted by greatest calamities] said: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all these things Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God." (Job i, 8–22)

"Job's body lay on a dung-heap, but his soul dwelt in Heaven; he whose soul overcame the unclean spirits was devoured by worms." (Cassiod.)

"Our fathers were tempted that they might be proved, whether they worshipped their God truly." (Judith viii, 21)

"I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him." (Ps. xc, 15)

"Afflicted in a few things, in many they shall be well rewarded; because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself." (Wis. iii, 5)

"The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men." (Eccli. xxvii, 6)

"Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. xii, 9)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." (Jas. i, 12)

"The God of all grace, . . . after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you." (1 Pet. v, 10)

"Which of the saints has been crowned without a combat? Abel, the just man, was slain, Abraham was exposed to the danger of losing his wife; inquire and you will find that all the saints suffered adversity; Solomon alone enjoyed uninterrupted pleasure, and perhaps that is why he fell; for whom God loves He chastises." (S. Jerome)

"The wind does not carry off the wheat, nor does the storm tear up the tree whose roots go deep into the ground; light chaff is scattered by the tempest, weak trees are uprooted by the whirlwind." (S. Cypr.)

"It is not we who suffer injury in plots and calumnies, it is those who inflict them." (S. Chrys.)

"To suffer gravely for the love of God is in itself a great reward and a just remuneration, even though suffering would have no other recompense." (*Id.*)

"It is a very great grace, and a truly perfect crown, to be considered worthy to suffer something for Christ's sake, and the reward for suffering will not be less." (*Id.*)

"There is nothing holier than the tongue that gives thanks to God in suffering; it is certainly not inferior to the tongues of martyrs: both are equally crowned." (*Id.*)

"There are some who are patient as long as everything is in accordance with their wishes; but if the slightest contradiction arises, it is seen how far they are from true patience." (S. Bern.)

"Indeed a Christian ceases in some manner to be such, who when placed in a position of suffering does not bear anything patiently." (Salvian)

"He who is unwilling to suffer except in so far as it seems good to himself and from whom he pleases, is not really patient." (*Imit.*, B. iii, c. 19)

Division

1. *Sufferings of the just and prosperity of sinners.*

In the sufferings of the just and the prosperity of sinners there is nothing that should shake our faith. That we may submit lovingly to God's will it is enough for us to know that He has so ordained. But we have innumerable proofs that nothing happens except by the permission of God's providence. This manner of His dealing with us is not so obscure and hidden that we cannot discover some reasons that are sufficient to justify it; and these are:

1°. God wishes to try His elect and to give them an occasion of showing their fidelity to Him; if He does not subject sinners to such trials, it is because He does not consider them worthy of Himself.

2°. God wishes to purify His elect from all earthly affections.

3°. God wishes to make certain the salvation of His elect, and to shelter them from the inevitable danger that is found in worldly prosperity.

4°. God wishes to force His elect by a loving violence to keep united to Him, by making everything else bitter to them, and everywhere offering them only objects that excite dislike.

5°. God wishes to provide His elect with matter of continual combats, in order that they may always have subjects of triumph and merit.

6°. God wishes to punish His elect in this world, in order not to punish them in the other.

Thus, as God takes care of His elect by the trials which He sends them, so He turns against sinners, by the very prosperity which they enjoy and which ruins them.

2. *Even in the trials of the just and the prosperity of the wicked there is that which can strengthen our faith.*

This distribution shows us three things:

1°. That there is another life than this, and that there are other riches to be hoped for;

2°. That Jesus Christ is faithful to the promises He made to us, and true in His predictions;

3°. That God saves us according to the order of predestination which He has traced out for all mankind; because He has resolved that we should be saved only by a holy conformity with Jesus Christ, His Son.

CXI

GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE TOWARDS GOD

"And one of them when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God . . . and giving thanks." (Luke xvii, 15, 16)

The example of this Samaritan should confound those Christians who fail in the duty of gratitude which they owe to God, for the benefits they have already received and still receive daily from Him. "There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger." (Luke xvii, 18). Consider: I. What should move us to show gratitude to God? II. In what does this gratitude consist?

I. WHAT SHOULD MOVE US TO SHOW GRATITUDE TO GOD

1. *Gratitude is a virtue which induces us to thank God for His benefits, and to use them for His glory and our own sanctification.* Are we, then, obliged to thank God? There is nothing more incontestable. Reason and Faith unite in convincing us of this duty. Reason tells us that we hold all from God, our soul, our body, our talents, our property. It teaches us that He made heaven and earth for us. Faith tells us that God by a pure effect of His goodness, has destined us for a supernatural end, namely, to possess Him for all eternity in Heaven. It teaches us also that God loved us so much that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to redeem us. But can we attentively consider all these benefits without feeling that we are bound to show God our gratitude for them?

"The natural order requires that he who has received benefit, should, by thanks, make a return to his benefactor." (S. Thos.)

"Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not He thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee? . . . Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee." (Deut. xxxii, 6, 18)

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord, thy God, require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord, thy God, and walk in His ways, and love Him . . . and keep the commandments of the Lord . . . that it may be well with thee." (Deut. x, 12, 13)

"I have brought up children and exalted them; but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood." (Is. i, 2, 3)

"What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes?" (Is. v, 4)

"When they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i, 21)

"Who would not be ashamed not to thank those who deserve thanks, when he sees that even beasts show gratitude? They preserve the recollection of the food given them, but you do not retain the remembrance of salvation received." (S. Ambr.)

2. *But as the greater number of men do not reflect on what reason and Faith teach them, the Lord adds* to the natural precept engraved in the soul of man a *positive commandment of gratitude*, a precept of the old Law, in the institution of the Sabbath, in thanksgiving for the creation of the world; in the feasts of Easter, Pentecost,—in gratitude for the deliverance from Egypt,—in the first fruits of the earth, the first-born,—which the Israelites should offer to God. Precept of the New Law: Why were Sunday and feasts instituted? Why the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass? In order that we might thank God for all His benefits. There is, then, an absolute precept commanding us all to show our gratitude to God. So the Church is very careful to warn us of this duty:

"Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God. It is meet and just. It is truly meet and just, right and salutary," etc. (Preface of the Mass)

"The worship of God consists chiefly in this. Hence in that most true and excellent Sacrifice we are admonished to give thanks to our God." (S. Aug.)

"In all things [in riches and in poverty] give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all." (1 Thess. v, 18)

The holy man, Tobias:

". . . repined not against God, because the evil of blindness had befallen him; but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life." (Tob. ii, 13, 14)

"But, alas! Men forget God at the very time when they are enjoying His blessings." (Lact.)

"Thank God! No saying can be shorter than this, nor can any act be more profitable." (S. Aug.)

"Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt; they remem-

bered not the multitude of Thy mercies. . . . They had quickly done, they forgot His works." (Ps. cv, 7, 13)

"If my enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it; but thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar; who didst take sweet meats together with me." (Ps. liv. 13–15)

"The greater the benefits that are conferred on men, the severer are the judgments appointed for sinners." (S. Chrys.)

"O man, see what I suffer for you, see the nails by which I am transfixed, see the pains by which I am afflicted; and great though My bodily suffering is, yet the pain in My heart is greater when I see you so ungrateful." (S. Bonav.)

"In the first work, that is, in creation, He gave me to myself; in the second He gave Himself to me; and when He gave Himself, He restored me to myself; therefore, given and restored, I owe myself for myself, and I owe myself twice. What shall I give to God for myself? For if I could give myself in payment a thousand times, what am I to God?" (S. Bern.)

"See how much He has given; in a twofold sense He has given it gratuitously, without either merit or labor on your part." (*Id.*)

"Rule thou over us and thy son; because thou hast delivered us from the hands of the Madian." (Judges viii, 22)

"They who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them." (2 Cor. v, 15)

II. IN WHAT DOES THIS GRATITUDE, WHICH WE OWE TO GOD, CONSIST, AND HOW IS IT PRACTISED?

The duties of gratitude can be reduced to three: (1) to value the benefit as it deserves, and to be mindful of it; (2) to publish the benefit received and to thank our benefactor; (3) to make a return by giving according to our means, and in proportion to what we have received.

1. *We should value the benefits of God as much as they deserve to be valued, and should never cease to remember them.* And how much shall we not esteem them if we consider Him from whom they come to us, the generosity with which He grants them, and their multitude? Ah! we have indeed cause to cry out with the prophet:

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? . . . Thou hast set him over the works of Thy hands." (Ps. viii, 5, 6)

Let us guard against imitating the blindness of the Jews:

"They forgot God, who saved them." (Ps. cv, 21)

"Remember and forget not." (Deut. ix, 7)

"Be ye thankful." (Col. iii, 15)

"Be instant in prayer; watching in it with thanksgiving." (Col. iv, 2)

"Those are ungrateful who do not acknowledge God as their Benefactor, and who, as servants, do not fear their Lord." (S. Ambr.)

"The ungrateful man is unworthy of a gift." (S. Bern.)

"He who retains in his heart the remembrance of benefits already received deserves to receive greater ones." (Cassiod.)

"Be grateful for the least, and you will be worthy to receive greater things. (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 10)

"He who receives small things gratefully invites greater favors to be given to him; and he who acknowledges benefits already conferred upon him receives the hope of future benefits." (Cassiod.)

"The remembrance of benefits and the constant acknowledgment of thanks is their best guardian." (S. Chrys.)

2. *The second duty imposed on us by gratitude is that of thanking our Sovereign Benefactor, and publishing the benefits received from Him.*

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul." (Ps. lxv, 16)

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." (2 Cor. ix, 15)

"To the only God be honor and glory." (1 Tim. i, 17)

Let us join our thanksgiving to that of Jesus Christ; there is no practice more perfect.

"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God." (Heb. xiii, 15)

"I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth." (Ps. xxxiii, 1)

"Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for He will yet far exceed, and His magnificence is wonderful." (Eccli. xliii, 32)

"We are able to give thanks to God, we cannot postpone it." (S. Aug.)

"To give thanks to God is to understand that all good things have been given by Him; and to praise Him for them is to show our faith in Him by our words and deeds." (*Id.*)

"If we are silent and forgetful of the divine gifts we have received, we shall be defrauded of their use, as ungrateful and unworthy." (S. Ambr.)

"Accept the benefit, render obedience, beware of punishment." (Hugh of S. Victor)

"Nothing contributed more to the ruin of the Jews than their ingratitude to God." (S. Chrys.)

3. *The principal duty imposed by gratitude is to give back to our Supreme Benefactor in proportion to His gifts to us, and according to our power.* And how can we fulfil this essential duty? We can do so by using the gifts of God according to His views, for His glory and our own salvation. . . . I have a body and a soul; how have I employed them? . . . I have talents; what use have I made of them? To what use have I put my temporal goods? Is it not at the very moment of gathering them that I offended God most? These are questions each one should put to himself. What heinous ingratitude, to turn against God the very gifts we receive from Him!

"Our mighty hand, and not the Lord, hath done all these things" [the impious say]. (Deut. xxxii, 27)

"They repaid Me evil for good." (Ps. xxxiv, 12)

"He that rendereth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house." (Prov. xvii, 13)

"The hope of the unthankful shall melt away as the winter's ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water." (Wis. xvi, 29)

"Thou shalt be desolate. Because thou hast forgotten God thy Saviour, and hast not remembered thy strong Helper: therefore shalt thou plant good plants, and shalt sow strange seed." (Is. xvii, 9, 10)

"Shall evil be rendered for good, because they have digged a pit for my soul?" (Jer. xviii, 20)

"They were filled, and were made full; and they lifted up their hearts and have forgotten Me." (Os. xiii, 6)

"Ingratitude is the root of all spiritual evil; it is a wind that dries up and burns every good, and closes the fount of mercy on man." (S. Aug.)

"The greater the gifts which man receives from God, the greater is his wickedness in abandoning God, and he becomes deserving of everlasting evil who kills in himself this good, which could be eternal." (*Id.*)

"The first who were proud were also the first who were ungrateful. I wish you to understand that you have some good things, be not ungrateful; but I want you also to remember that you have them not from yourself, lest you be proud." (*Id.*)

"God entirely ignores the ungrateful." (*Id.*)

"Men who use the gifts of God and do not refer them to the Giver are by that crime proved to be unjust." (*Id.*)

"Ingratitude is a deadly thing, the foe of grace, the enemy of salvation." (S. Bern.)

"Nothing displeases God so much as ingratitude, especially in the children of grace; for it blocks up the channels of grace." (*Id.*)

"Ingratitude is the enemy of the soul, the exhausting of merits, the loss of virtues, the scattering of benefits, a burning wind, drying up the fountain of piety, the dew of mercy, the stream of grace." (*Id.*)

"What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv, 12)

Divisions

I

1. Motives of our gratitude to God.

1°. The innumerable multitude of His gifts;

2°. The magnitude of His benefits, such as the Redemption, etc.;

3°. The circumstances that accompany His favors,—having looked on us as if we were just, at the time when we were in sin.

2. Qualities which gratitude should have.

1°. It ought to be *special,* that is to say, we should attribute to God alone the benefits we enjoy;

2°. It ought to be *universal,* that is to say, we should thank Him for all His favors;

3°. It ought to be *lasting,* that is, we should unceasingly consecrate our hearts to God by good works, and our tongues by praise.

II

We should shun ingratitude:

1. Because there is nothing God hates so much as this sin;

2. Because God takes away from the ungrateful the graces He had given them;

3. Because ingratitude places an obstacle to our getting the graces we require.

CXII

DISCORDS, DIVISIONS, LAWSUITS

"Whence then hath it cockle? . . . An enemy hath done this." (Matth. xiii, 27, 28)

Discords, divisions, often prevail in parishes, in families, sometimes even among good people. What evils and disorders they produce! How difficult it is to remove them! How many sins they cause. Woe to those who sow discord! I. They are the enemies of God, whom they grievously offend; II. They are the enemies of man and of society, by the divisions they cause among people who were united; III. They are their own enemies, by the evils they procure for and draw down on themselves.

I. SOWERS OF DISCORD ARE THE ENEMIES OF GOD

He who causes divisions and discord among people who were united is the declared enemy of God: "An enemy hath done this."

1. *He destroys the kingdom of God in this world,* because that kingdom consists of justice, peace, and joy. God established His kingdom in charity and it is by charity that He reigns in us. But he who sows discord destroys that charity, by breaking the union that should exist among Christians. Whence it follows that such a man being an enemy of God in a manner different from all others, God declares Himself in a particular manner to be his enemy. This is why the Holy Ghost says:

"Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth: . . . him that soweth discord among his brethren." (Prov. vi, 16, 19)

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matth. xii, 25)

"Discord among Christians is the triumph of the devils." (S. Aug.)

"Strife is an assault upon truth with the audacity of clamor." (S. Ambr.)

"Whatever separates brethren must be called a hell." (S. Jerome)

2. *He is the enemy of God because he destroys the work of Jesus Christ,* that is, the peace and union which He came to bring into the world, which He sealed with His blood, and which He so strongly recommended.

"God is not the God of dissension, but of peace; as also I teach in all the churches of the saints." (1 Cor. xiv, 33)

3. *He is the enemy of God, because as discord is opposed to peace,* which God alone can give us, to labor in destroying the peace which He has established is, in some manner, to take part against God; it is to cause His subjects to revolt against Him; to become His enemy in His own household, more dangerous and insidious than strangers who attack Him openly.

"The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." (Acts iv, 32)

"[But now] whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members?" (Jas. iv, 1)

"I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, and to avoid them." (Rom. xvi, 17)

"I hear that there are schisms among you." (1 Cor. xi, 18)

"The devil sows discord in your heart; is he not always the sower of discord, the author of dissensions, the originator of quarrels?" (S. Aug.)

"Those who are more eager for contention than for truth, are accustomed to resort to the subterfuges of a wicked defence." (*Id.*)

"Harmony in human affairs, is a great but a rare thing; it is praised by all, it is preserved by few." (*Id.*)

"Harmony can never be preserved except by patience." S. Greg.)

"As it is a great evil if union ceases in good things, so it is pernicious if it does not cease in sinful things." (*Id.*)

"There is nothing that dissolves friendships more easily than the opposite opinions of men." (S. Basil)

"Discord stirs up open war among men." (S. Chrys.)

"Force must be used against disturbers of the peace." (Cassiod.)

"See the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fishes in the sea. You will not find such discord among them, as it is evident among men." (S. Bonav.)

"Doubt not that the Spirit of life will depart from him who is separated from unity." (S. Bern.)

"As the abode of the Lord is made in peace, so it is clear that in discord a dwelling place is made for the devil." (*Id.*)

"Whence arises this discord among brethren, who although of one mother, are not of one mind?" (S. Aug.)

II. THEY ARE THE ENEMIES OF MAN AND OF SOCIETY

He who sows discord is the enemy of man and of society, since he separates those who were united by the closest bonds of nature and of blood. No enemy can produce more evil, or greater disorders; he is the cause of the hatred that keeps people at enmity; of the lawsuits which it provokes;—he is the cause of quarrels, of outrages and often of murders. Is it not division, discord, that ruins the noblest families? "An enemy hath done this." He who sows discord is the cause of all these evils, all these crimes. And how difficult it is to repair the evil that has been done! To extinguish the fire that has been kindled by an indiscreet word, by an idle tale!

"Abraham said to Lot: Let there be no quarrel, I beseech thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren." (Gen. xiii, 8)

"It is better to separate in friendship than to dwell together in discord; it is better to depart without strife than to remain and quarrel." (S. Ambr.)

"He that studieth discords, loveth quarrels." (Prov. xvii, 19)

"An angry man stirreth up strife." (Prov. xxvi, 21)

"A passionate man kindleth strife." (Eccli. xxviii, 11)

"It is an honor for a man to separate himself from quarrels." (Prov. xx, 3)

"Cast out the scoffer, and contention shall go out with him." (Prov. xxii, 10)

"Among the proud there are always contentions." (Prov. xiii, 10)

"The lips of the fool intermeddle with strife; and his mouth provoketh quarrels." (Prov. xviii, 6)

"A perverse man stirreth up quarrels." (Prov. xvi, 28)

"Strive not with a powerful man, lest thou fall into his hands." (Eccli. viii, 1)

"Contend not with a rich man, lest he bring an action against thee." (*Ibid.*, 2)

"Refrain from strife and thou shalt diminish thy sins." (Eccli. xxviii, 10)

"If a wise man contend with a fool . . . he shall find no rest." (Prov. xxix, 9)

"If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." (Matth. v, 40)

"I fear . . . lest perhaps contentions, envyings, animosities, dissensions, seditions, be among you." (2 Cor. xii, 20)

"Whereas there is among you envying and contention, are you not carnal?" (1 Cor. iii, 3)

"The servant of the Lord must not wrangle." (2 Tim. ii, 24)

"Admonish them . . . not to be litigious." (Tit. iii, 1, 2)

"If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God." (1 Cor. xi, 16)

"Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. vi, 7)

"If you bite and devour one another, take heed you be not consumed one of another." (Gal. v, 15)

"As the whole body is injured in one member, so the fellowship of all humanity is broken off in one man; the natural disposition of the human race and the unity of the Church are injured." (S. Ambr.)

"In settling a dispute care must be taken that it does not break out into strife." (S. Aug.)

"By litigation we acquire an inheritance of one kind, but we lose an inheritance of another kind, namely, that of the heavenly kingdom. Let those who are unwilling to lose this last avoid litigation." (*Id.*)

"He who wishes ill to his adversary engages in a lawsuit; he wishes his adversary to lose and himself to gain; he wishes his adversary to be deprived of something of which he himself would become the owner." (*Id.*)

"Either do not engage in strife at all, or end it as quickly as possible; lest anger should grow into hatred, make a beam out of a stalk, and cause murder." (*Id.*)

"The anxiety of a lawsuit is the snare of death." (S. Chrys.)

"Christ wishes us to avoid lawsuits; see how those Christians despise His wishes." (Salvian)

"Contention feasts on lawsuits, it kindles the flames of hatred, it destroys concord." (S. Isid.)

"Unhappy is that victory in which the victor, overcoming man, is himself conquered by vice." (S. Bern.)

"Take particular care to avoid disputes; to contend with an equal is dangerous; with a superior, madness; with an inferior, despicable." (Cassiod.)

"Christ is peace,—in the forum is discord; Christ is justice,—in the forum is injustice; Christ is faith,—in the forum are fraud and perfidy; Christ is charity,—in the forum is detraction." (S. Bern.)

"Banish strife, renew peace, lest your friend be lost to you, and your enemy, the devil, rejoice regarding both of you." (S. Aug.)

III. THEY ARE THEIR OWN ENEMIES

He who sows dissension is his own worst enemy; and although he seeks and sometimes finds his own advantage in the quarrels of those whom he believes to be opposed to his designs, yet he does more harm to himself than to others.

1. *How many sins does he not cause?* He is guilty and responsible before God for them. How can he repair all the injury he has done?

"Their heart is divided, now they shall perish." (Os. x, 2)

"Where envy and contention is, there is inconstancy, and every evil work." (Jas. iii, 16)

"Whatever leads to dissension must of necessity lead to destruction." (Lact.)

"Those who sow dissension perpetrate innumerable evils in that one evil, because by sowing discord they extinguish charity which is the source of all virtues." (S. Greg.)

"Dissensions are generally of little importance in the beginning, and are easily remedied; but growing worse as time goes on, they become altogether incurable." (S. Basil)

2. *He who causes dissension draws on himself the hatred not only of God, but also of men;* he is held in horror by every one. As he has turned into enemies those who were formerly his friends, so when his intrigues and malice are discovered, those whom he has divided unite in their dislike and detestation of him.

3. *Finally, what maledictions, both of God and of men, does he not draw down on himself?* Instead of being received into Heaven, which is the kingdom of peace, should he not expect to become the companion of the devils, whose minister and agent he has beeen, and whose malice he has imitated?

"A man that is an apostate . . . at all times soweth discord." (Prov. vi, 12, 14)

"An evil man always seeketh quarrels." (Prov. xvii, 11)

"Enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects . . . and such like; of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." (Gal. v, 20, 21)

"If those who love peace are called the children of God, undoubtedly those who cause discord are the children of Satan." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"The language of the sower of discord is the language of the devil." (S. Bonav.)

"Woe to that man by whom the bond of unity is disturbed." (S. Bern.)

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Ps. cxxxii, 1)

"Therefore let us follow after the things that are of peace." (Rom. xiv, 19)

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." (Luke ii, 14)

Division

1. *Causes of dissension and discord:*

1°. Pride or vain-glory; a man strives, he desires to gain the victory, he cannot bear a rival. We break off friendly intercourse with any one who disputes with us a rank, a prerogative, although he has more right to it than we.

2°. Envy and jealousy, which are not less the enemies of peace and union.

3°. Avarice and the craving for worldly wealth, which cause people to engage in lawsuits, and sow discord everywhere.

2. *Pernicious effects of dissension:*

1°. It troubles the peace of the heart, by vexation, anger, and other sinful passions, which it excites in those who are divided.

2°. It causes quarrels, wrangling, and violence.

3°. It causes strife and enmity.

CXIII

AMBITION

"I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the Most High." (Is. xiv, 14)

Ambition is an unruly passion that urges man to advance himself to a higher position in this world; or rather, it is an immoderate desire for the honors and dignities that bring with them the respect and consideration of others. Consider: I. The guilt and misery of ambition; II. The danger of ambition.

I. GUILT AND MISERY OF AMBITION

There is no one more unhappy even in this life than the ambitious man.

1. *To what torment, to what slavery, is he not reduced in order to accomplish his designs?* What mean and shameful flattery in order to gain the favor of the great! How he cringes and humbles himself in order to gain a higher position! What fear, what anxiety for the success of the plans and projects which he forms! And if he does not succeed, if he sees himself thwarted, what vexations, what alarms!

"He who passionately desires fame is more a slave than all slaves." (S. Chrys.)

"Honor, an alluring fame, an unhappy slavery, a sad ending." (S. Paulin.)

"Let each one free himself from the passion for worldly dignities, which so disturbs the heart and soul, that a man cannot be master of himself." (S. Ambr.)

"The ambitious man first becomes the slave of others in order to rule them afterwards; he bows down in flattery that he may be honored; and when he wishes to be exalted, he becomes more careless." (*Id.*)

"Ambition is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden disease, the origin of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the source of vices, the fomenter of crimes, the rust that consumes virtues, the moth of sanctity, the blinder of hearts, creating diseases out of the remedy, producing sickness from medicine." (S. Bern.)

"O, ambition, torment of those who crave for honors! how, while torturing all, dost thou please all? Nothing inflicts sharper pain, nothing causes more grievous disturbance." (*Id.*)

"Ambition is the cause of madness." (*Id.*)

"There is no poison, no sword I fear more for you than the ambition to rule." (*Id.*)

"The fire [ambition] never saith: It is enough." (Prov. xxx, 16)

2. *The ambitious man renders himself odious to God and man.* God resists pride, which is inseparable from ambition, and properly speaking, it is the ambitious designs which He resists, according to the word of the Holy Ghost:

"God resisteth the proud." (Jas. iv, 6)

"Thy arrogancy hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart: O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, and endeavorest to lay hold on the height of the hill; but though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as an eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord." (Jer. xlix, 16)

The ambitious man is not less hateful to men who through secret pride cannot suffer any one to raise himself above them.

"Come, let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven; and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands. [But what happened?] The Lord came down to see . . . [and punish]." (Gen. xi, 4 f.)

"When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down." (Ps. lxxii, 18)

"That which is high to men is an abomination before God." (Luke xvi, 15)

"It is altogether intolerable pride when any one strives to domineer over those who are his equals." (S. Aug.)

"When ambitious men desire to obtain dignities, they first gain over others to their side by love; when, however, they have gained what they sought, puffed up by pride, they afterwards subject to themselves by their power those very people in whom, when in private life, they inspired not fear but love." (S. Bern.)

3. *The ambitious man is constantly exposed to dangers of all kinds, either from his competitors or his opponents, who seek to supplant him, or even from the nature of the honors and dignities which he seeks.* All these are fragile and changeable. The reverses which he experiences, the changes of fortune, trouble the tranquillity of his life, and are sources of danger.

"The enemies of the Lord, presently after they shall be honored and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke." (Ps. xxxvi, 20)

"He that maketh his house high, seeketh a downfall." (Prov. xvii, 16)

"Thou hast lifted me up, and set me as it were upon the wind, and Thou hast mightily dashed me." (Job xxx, 22)

"Whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister." (Matth. xx, 26)

"Ambition apes charity; for charity is patient in the hope of an eternal reward, ambition suffers all for things that pass away; charity is liberal to the poor, ambition to the rich; charity endures all things for truth, ambition, for vanity; each believes all things, hopes all things, but from an entirely different motive." (Salvian.)

"Those who strive for pre-eminence are a disgrace to themselves, not knowing that in this way they reduce themselves to the lowest depths." (S. Chrys.)

"Because of their ruling passion, you see ambitious men incurring all kinds of danger, stirring up scandals, enduring hatred, leaving insults pass unnoticed, disregarding maledictions." (S. Bern.)

"Tell me, what will all your ambitious projects in this life come to? Can you have a higher hope than to become the king's friend or favorite? And if you succeed in this project, what will you have but a most uncertain, unstable position, and a most dangerous office? Besides, through how many dangers and disappointments must you not pass to arrive at this most dangerous height?" (S. Aug.)

"They mount up to the heavens, and they go down to the depths: their soul pined away with evils." (Ps. cvi, 26)

"And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell." (Luke x, 15)

"God hath overturned the thrones of proud princes, and hath set up the meek in their stead." (Eccli. x, 17)

"They [the ambitious] shall build up, and I will throw down." (Malach. i, 4)

"The ambitious [like our first parents] covet divinity and they lose happiness." (S. Aug.)

II. DANGER OF AMBITION

Ambition destroys all the sources of salvation. Three things are necessary for us if we would save our souls: (1) to be in a state of grace; (2) to keep the commandments of God and of His Church;

(3) to make a good use of the graces which God bestows on us. This is the entire spirit of Christianity, and ambition wholly destroys it.

1. *Ambition destroys holiness and innocence by the crimes it causes*

"They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." (John xii, 43)

"You know that the princes of the gentiles lord it over them; and they that are greater exercise power over them. It shall not be so among you." (Matth. xx, 25, 26)

"As often as I strive to rule over men, so often do I strive to rule over my God." (S. Aug.)

"Although you should fittingly fill the higher position, without which people cannot be governed, yet it is unbecoming to strive for it." (*Id.*)

"This is what ruins the human race most, that it will not recognize the limits of its nature, but is always wishing for greater things, and that it grasps in desire those things that are above its dignity." (S. Chrys.)

"Ambition often makes criminals of those whom no other vices allure, whom no luxury could move, no avarice ruin." (S. Ambr.)

"The supremacy that is obtained by sedition or occupied through ambition, though it may not be abused by misgovernment, by bad morals, or by oppressive enactments, is held by a bad title from the beginning, and the example then given was pernicious. And even though such a rule may be tolerated after a time for the public good, still it is with difficulty that things which have a bad beginning can be made to end well." (S. Leo)

2. *Ambition destroys piety and religion by the independence which it instils; it takes away the respect that is due to God by raising itself up against Him*

"As a violent storm bursting over a tranquil sea stirs it up from its lowest depths, so that the sand is mixed with the waves; so ambition and dishonorable gain, infecting all things, ruin the soul." (S. Chrys.)

"The passion of ambition especially darkens the reasoning faculty." (*Id.*)

"The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually." (Ps. lxxiii, 23)

"My little finger is thicker than the back of my father." (3 Kings xii, 10)

It is thus that ambition is accustomed to make our merit grow greater in our own estimation.

3. *Ambition abuses the grace of God, which urges us to despise the glory of this world*

"There is hardly any one who is destitute of the love of power and who does not long for worldly fame." (S. Aug.)

"Honor, [fame] should seek you, not be sought by you." (*Id.*)

"Pre-eminence seeks him who flies from it, flies from him who seeks it." (S. Chrys.)

"Some admired the things he [S. Hilary] did, his almost incredible fast and abstinence, for instance. But for my part, there is nothing that surprises me so much as his profound humility, his trampling under foot the honor and glory of this world." (S. Jerome)

"The seat of power must not be given to those who desire it, but offered to those who shun it. Therefore let him who is endowed with virtue assume power when forced to do so." (S. Greg.)

"Seek not of the Lord a pre-eminence, nor of the king the seat of honor." (Eccli. vii, 4)

"Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou hast strength enough to extirpate iniquities." (*Ibid.*, 6)

"Thou shalt no more be lifted up because of My holy mountain." (Sophon. iii, 11)

"Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor are my eyes lofty." (Ps. cxxx, 1)

"Go, sit down in the lowest place [and it shall be said to thee]: Friend, go up higher." (Luke xiv, 10)

Divisions

I

1. The *honors of this world* are, in the order of eternal predestination, so many *calls from God;* but our ambition profanes them, in aspiring to them as to purely temporal advantages.

2. The honors of this world are *real causes constraining him who possesses them to serve others;* but our ambition abuses them in longing for them in order to exercise an empty sway and a haughty power.

3. The honors of the world are *indispensable engagements to work and suffer;* but our ambition perverts them with the object of finding in them an easy and pleasant life.

II

1. *Ambition is criminal before God.* In what?

In the projects with which it inspires the ambitious.

2. *Ambition leads to an unhappy end.* How?

By the divine judgments and the chastisements which it draws down on the ambitious: "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low." (Luke iii, 5)

1. *Ambition is blind in its quests and pursuits*: "You know not what you ask."

2. It is *presumptuous in its opinion:* "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?"

3. It is *dangerous and odious in its effects*: "And the ten hearing it were moved with indignation." (Matth. xx, 23, 24)

CXIV

TITLES, DIGNITIES, HONORS

"I will go to the great men . . . and behold these have altogether broken the yoke more and have burst the bonds." (Jer. v, 5)

He who is raised to any dignity or post, is bound to fulfil all the duties of his position punctually and carefully; but Christian prudence should prevent him from so giving himself up to his business affairs as to cause him to forget his duties as a Christian and the affair of his eternal salvation. Consider: I. The vanity and danger of worldly dignities; II. The obligations of the great.

I. VANITY AND DANGER OF WORDLY DIGNITIES

Worldly honors are, (1) vain; (2) dangerous; (3) often the cause of the greatest evils.

1. *Vanity of worldly honors.* They are of short duration and unstable like the things on which they are founded.

"I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo, he was not." (Ps. xxxvi, 35, 36)

"The lofty eyes of man are humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be made to stoop; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Is. ii, 11)

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled." (Luke xiv, 11)

"O ye sons of men, why do you love vanity and seek after lying." (Ps. iv, 3)

"Fear not the riches and glory of the world, since they are fleeting, and disappear more quickly than they come; this treasure is a dream: wake up, and it has passed away." (S. Aug.)

"What are worldly honors but pride and vanity, and danger of ruin?" (S. Aug.)

"The evil spirit showed [to Christ] all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time; and rightly in a moment, because they cannot last longer." (S. Ambr.)

"The power of the wicked is compared in the Scriptures to the

flowers of the field, because when earthly glory shines brightest, it falls away; when it is exalted in itself, it is suddenly ended by being cut off." (S. Greg.)

"Whatever seems agreeable, pleasing, fortunate, or eminent in this world, is deceitful, because it is gained with difficulty and is soon lost." (*Id.*)

"Honors seem to be dignities, but in reality they are not, on the contrary, they are slavery." (S. Chrys.)

"All things in this world are imaginary, and there is nothing real." (Tert.)

"Worldly pomp and popular favor are as smoke, a light cloud quickly passing away; and if they give pleasure for a short time, they give pain for a longer period." (S. Chrys.)

"All human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly grandeur, compared with eternal glory are vanity and foolishness." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 40)

"The glory is short-lived which is given and taken by men." (*Imit.*, c. 6)

2. *Worldly dignities are dangerous to salvation.* They incite to pleasures, injustice, and impiety.

"He who is not overcome by those evil vices, anger and cupidity, is a most upright judge." (S. Jerome)

"I have said that the desire of dominion and power, not of the work itself, is sinful." (S. Chrys.)

"I consider the position and I fear the fall; I contemplate the lofty dignity, and I look down into the abyss lying below; I gaze into the great depth and draw back in fear from its vicinity." (S. Bern.)

"There are many who would not desire honors so eagerly if they knew them to be burdensome [and dangerous]." (*Id.*)

"There shall be a most severe judgment for them that bear rule. . . . The mighty shall be mightily tormented. . . . A great punishment is ready for the more mighty." (Wis. vi, 6, 7, 9)

"In temporal things there are deceptive sweetness, unfruitful labor, vain hope, and dangerous delight." (S. Lawr. Just.)

3. *They are often the cause of the greatest evils, for what is he not capable of who desires to raise himself up at any cost?*

"We see power lapsing into vice, and the authority to govern become an incentive to sin." (S. Ambr.)

"It is a vain error of man and a worthless refinement of dignity, to be resplendent in purple and filthy in mind." (Minut. Felix)

"A few purchase honor at the cost of many. What can be meaner?

What more wicked? The poor pay the price of dignities which they did not buy; they know they must pay, though they had no voice in the making of the bargain. To make a few great and illustrious, the world is turned upside down." (Salvian.)

II. OBLIGATIONS OF THE GREAT, (1) WITH REFERENCE TO GOD; (2) WITH REFERENCE TO THEIR INFERIORS; (3) WITH REFERENCE TO THEMSELVES

1. *To God.* The great should employ their power and their dignities in order to make Him honored and served. They should refer all the glory of their power and dignity to God, from whom they have received them. They should show themselves sincerely grateful to Him for them. They should never permit their dependents to do anything opposed to the service of the Lord. On the contrary, they should always prefer His glory to their own interests.

"As the judge of the people is himself, so are his ministers; and what manner of man the ruler of a city is, such also are they that dwell therein." (Eccli. x, 2)

"Iniquity came out from Babylon from the ancient judges that seemed to govern the people." (Dan. xiii, 5)

"They have reigned, but not by me; they have been princes, and I knew not." (Os. viii, 4)

"The great man, and the judge, and the mighty is in honor; and there is none greater than he that feareth God." (Eccli. x, 27)

"That seed of men shall be honored that feareth God." (*Ibid.*, 23)

"Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify; but they that despise Me shall be despised." (1 Kings ii, 30)

"And now, O ye kings, understand; receive instruction, you that judge the earth. Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling." (Ps. ii, 10, 11)

"All the men of Israel said to Gedeon: Rule thou over us, . . . and he said to them: I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you, but the Lord shall rule over you." (Judges viii, 22)

"Hath any one of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees?" (John vii, 48)

"When just men increase, the people shall rejoice; when the wicked shall bear rule, the people shall mourn." (Prov. xxix, 2)

"There is an evil that I have seen under the sun. . . . A fool set in high dignity." (Eccli. x, 5, 6)

"Virtue should strive, not for honor and glory, but for virtue." (S. Aug.)

"Let us attribute the power of ruling and governing to the true God

only, who bestows happiness on the just alone, but gives earthly power to both just and sinners." (S. Aug.)

"We should refer all honor to God, the Author of our being; and the more honorable we are, the more God bestows His gifts on us, the more we should love Him in return." (S. Aug.)

"From the honor of your state you should understand how much you owe to your Creator; and the more you feel the honor bestowed on you, the greater should be your love for Him." (S. Aug.)

"Virtue is the mother of glory, for to virtue alone is glory justly due and safely given. On the other hand, that glory which is not accompanied by virtue, most certainly comes without cause, is quickly assumed, and is sought after with great danger." (S. Bern.)

2. *Towards those above whom they are raised they should act with kindness, using their authority with moderation and indulgence.*

"Love justice, you that are the judges of the earth." (Wis. i, 1)

"You shall hear the little as well as the great. Neither shall you respect any man's person, because it is the judgment of God." (Deut. i, 17)

"The duty of a king is to risk his life for his subjects." (S. Aug.)

"Those who are in authority should be influenced not by the lust of domineering, but by the duty of providing for the public good; not by the pride of ruling, but by the mercy of providing." (S. Aug.)

"It is a greater virtue to govern well, not alone oneself but many; and the more there are, the greater will be the distinction." (S. Thos.)

"[Strive] to do those things that injure no one, and serve all." (S. Ambr.)

"Never set yourself above any one because of the nobility of your descent; for our religion knows no distinction of persons, nor conditions of men, but considers souls." (S. Jerome)

"You do this [ye great], because you are able to do it; but whether you ought to do it is another question." (S. Bern.)

"Would it not be unbecoming in you to set up your own will for law, and to exercise power unreasonably, because there is no one before whom you could be summoned?" (S. Bern.)

"Authority does not give happiness. But consider yourselves unhappy unless you do good." (S. Bern.)

"If one of the people errs, he alone suffers; but the error of the ruler involves many, and injures all under his authority." (S. Bern.)

"He by whom kings rule has placed us over His people that we may watch over, not injure them." (S. Bern.)

"You rule, not that you may become great through your subjects, but that they may become great through you." (S. Bern.)

3. *With regard to themselves, they should avoid ostentation, luxury, pride, and be humble in their exalted position.*

"Give ear, you that rule the people, and that please yourselves in multitudes of nations: for power is given to you by the Lord, and strength by the Most High, who will examine your works and search out your thoughts." (Wis. vi, 3, 4)

"Take heed what you do: for you exercise not the judgment of man, but of the Lord. And whatsoever you judge, it shall redound to you." (2 Paralip. xix, 6)

"The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things; for great is the power of God alone, and He is honored by the humble." (Eccli. iii, 20, 21)

"Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up: be among them as one of them." (Eccli. xxxii, 1)

"The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. And He will give it to whomsoever it shall please Him: and He will appoint the basest man over it." (Dan. iv, 14)

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." (Luke xii, 48)

"The greater the earthly dignity of kings, the more they should humble themselves before God." (S. Aug.)

"Why do you boast of your nobility? Were not all born in the same condition; and will not death be the end of all?" (S. Aug.)

"Emperor and man are born alike; the Giver of life gives the power." (Tert.)

"You are magnanimous in your high state; you praise your parents. We are born equal in condition; it is by virtue alone we become distinguished." (Minut. Felix)

"Noble work is greater than noble birth." (S. Ambr.)

"He who is noble, renowned, and elevated, may think his nobility perfect, if he disdains to be the slave of vice and to be overcome by it. (S. Chrys.)

Divisions

I

1. *Dignities and offices are full of danger for the virtuous,* who may be perverted by them.

2. They are *still more dangerous for sinners,* to whom they furnish more means and opportunities of satisfying their passions and committing great crimes.

II

Those in high station are under greater obligations than others to be faithful to God:

1. Because of the *gratitude* which they owe to God, who has favored them with these advantages in preference to so many others.

2. Because, being exposed to greater dangers, to more frequent occasions of offending God, they require *more special graces* to save their souls.

3. Because of the *good example* which they should give to those who are subject to them.

III

1. *God has placed some in exalted positions,*

1°. In order that they may protect and defend others, and help them in their temporal necessities.

2°. That by their good example and by every other means which Christian charity and zeal for the glory of God may suggest, they may assist others to sanctify their souls.

2. *Rulers and governors draw the divine anger on themselves,*

1°. When, instead of procuring the honor and glory of God, they prevent it being given to Him.

2°. When, instead of upholding justice and causing the laws to be observed, they themselves are the first to violate them.

3°. When they employ for the corruption of morals the very means which God has given them to preserve morality, or when they do not repress scandals.

CXV

RICHES AND PROSPERITY

"You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matth. vi, 24)
"The rich man died and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi, 22)

It is not a sin to be rich, nor in itself an obstacle to salvation. A man can save his soul in the midst of riches if he makes a good use of them. Nevertheless riches are commonly: I. Acquired by unlawful means; II. Dangerous when possessed; III. Baneful in their effect.

I. RICHES ARE USUALLY ACQUIRED BY UNLAWFUL MEANS

A man can acquire riches by just means, but it often happens that a too eager desire for gain causes men to use unlawful means in order to grow rich in a short time. This inordinate desire is in itself sinful and opposed to the Gospel, which enjoins detachment from earthly goods. The passion for riches is the cause of an infinite number of crimes, frauds, law-suits, and acts of crying injustice.

"Labor not to be rich, but set bounds to thy prudence." (Prov. xxiii, 4)

"Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life; lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny and say: Who is the Lord? or being compelled by poverty, I should steal, and forswear the name of my God." (Prov. xxx, 8, 9)

"Lift not up thy eyes to riches, which thou canst not have." (Prov. xxiii, 5)

"All things obey money." (Eccle. x, 19)

"Blessed is the rich man . . . that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures." (Eccli. xxxi, 8)

"Blessed is he who has not gone after those things which, when possessed, become a burden, when loved corrupt, when lost cause grief." (S. Bern.)

"Woe to you that join house to house and lay field to field even to the end of the place; shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?" (Is. v, 8)

"Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own. How long also doth he load himself with thick clay?" (Habac. ii, 6)

"Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal." (Matth. vi, 19)

"They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi, 9)

"He who wishes to be rich is poor." (S. Aug.)

"A man cherishes that which he loves more than other things." (*Id.*)

"He who desires counterfeit riches does not seek those that are real." (*Id.*)

"Those who grow rich by unjust means are in great poverty." (*Id.*)

"Those who despise the lust of wealth are richer than all others." (S. Chrys.)

"If you despise the things of this world, you will be superior to the world together with the saints, of whom the world was not worthy. If, therefore, you wish to be worthy of heavenly treasures despise the good of earth." (*Id.*)

"If you are wise, if you have sense, if the light of your eyes is with yourself, cease pursuing those things the gaining of which is misery." (S. Bern.)

"We should shun riches, which are not sought for without toil, are not gained without difficulty, are not preserved without anixety, are not possessed without a criminal love, and are not lost without grief." (S. Prosper.)

II. THE POSSESSION OF RICHES IS GENERALLY DANGEROUS

There is almost always reason to fear that the heart may become attached to them. Although God does not forbid us to possess wealth, and does not oblige those who are wealthy to part with their riches, yet it cannot be doubted that too great an attachment to this world's goods is a grave sin; but the danger of becoming attached to them, of placing one's hopes in them, of making an idol of them, is almost inevitable. Moreover, as wealth is very often abused, it is difficult for its possessor to avoid the disorders which riches bring with them.

"If riches abound, set not your heart upon them." (Ps. lxi, 11)

"Behold the man that made not God his Helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and prevailed in his vanity." (Ps. li, 9)

"He that trusteth in his riches shall fail." (Prov. xi, 28)

"The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich." (Prov. x, 22)

"The crown of the wise is their riches." (Prov. xiv, 24)

"The ransom of a man's life are his riches." (Prov. xiii, 8)

"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content." (Prov. xv, 16)

"Wisdom with riches is more profitable. . . . For as wisdom is a defence, so money is a defence." (Eccle. vii, 12, 13)

"If thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin." (Eccli. xi, 10)

"Gold and silver hath destroyed many." (Eccli. viii, 3)

"Riches are good to him that hath no sin in his conscience." (Eccli. xiii, 30)

"The house that is very rich shall be brought to nothing by pride." (Eccli. xxi, 5)

"They have woven the webs of spiders. . . . Their webs shall not be for clothing, neither shall they cover themselves with their works. Their works are unprofitable works, and the work of iniquity is in their hands." (Is. lix, 5, 6)

"I am become rich, I have found me an idol. (Os. xii, 8)

"The care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word and he becometh fruitless." (Matth. xiii, 22)

"Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches." (1 Tim. vi, 17)

"You wish to be wealthy and you do not wish to be virtuous; you should blush for your wealth if a house full of riches has in you a sinful master." (S. Aug.)

"Put away pride, and riches will not injure you." (*Id.*)

"Pride is the worm of riches; it is difficult for a rich man not to be proud." (*Id.*)

"Who can believe that happiness is to be found in those things which the Son of God taught us to despise?" (*Id.*)

"Job lost all his wealth; but when he unexpectedly became the poorest of men, he kept his mind so firm and so fixed on God, that he proved clearly that he was not the slave of riches, but that riches were subject to him while he was subject to God." (*Id.*)

"Let a temperate man consider that in transitory things of this kind nothing should be eagerly sought after by him; let him employ in the duties and necessities of life as much as is sufficient, with the moderation of a user, not with the affection of a lover." (*Id.*)

"So use this world as if you did not use it, that with its riches you may do good and not become bad." (*Id.*)

"The powerful and sinners have this peculiar to themselves, that, occupied with the false riches of earth, they neglect the true riches of Heaven, and the less they search for what is true, the more they are exalted by false wealth." (S. Greg.)

"Let the rich learn that guilt is not in wealth but in those who know

not how to make a good use of it; for as riches are an obstacle to the wicked, so to the just they are a help to virtue." (S. Ambr.)

"He who makes a bad use of riches, is miserable, like a man who voluntarily wounds himself with the sword which he took up to punish his enemies." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"Riches have been given to be a help to life, not to be an incitement to evil; money should be the ransom of the soul, not the cause of its destruction." (S. Basil)

"Gold and silver, and such things, as far as the mind is concerned, are neither good nor bad in themselves; the lawful use of them is good, while the abuse of them is bad, anxiety of mind about them worse, and too eager a longing for them still more disgraceful." (S. Bern.)

"The pain caused by the insatiable longing for riches is far greater than the pleasures caused by their use." (*Id.*)

III. RICHES ARE BANEFUL IN THEIR EFFECTS

Sometimes we lose them, or they are taken from us, and this causes us sorrow and grief. Sometimes they bring upon us difficulties, anxieties, a thousand vexatious matters that trouble our peace of mind. If they have been unjustly acquired, they cause great remorse of conscience. And even though we may not be deprived of them during life we must necessarily abandon them at death. But with what regret! Finally, they can destroy our souls and hurl us into everlasting misery.

"O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions." (Eccli. xli, 1)

"Be not thou afraid when a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased; for when he shall die he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him." (Ps. xlviii, 17, 18)

"They shall leave their riches to strangers, and their sepulchres shall be their homes for ever." (Ps. xlviii, 11, 12)

"They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands." (Ps. lxxv, 6)

"They that trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches. No brother can redeem, nor shall man redeem; he shall not give to God his ransom." (Ps. xlviii, 7, 8)

"The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." (Ps. xxxiii, 11)

"Riches shall not profit in the day of revenge." (Prov. xi, 4)

"Neither shall their silver and their gold be able to deliver them in the day of wrath." (Sophon. i, 18)

"The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him; he shall open his eyes and find nothing. Poverty like water shall take hold on him, a tempest shall oppress him in the night." (Job xxvii, 19, 20)

"Thy riches and thy treasures I will give unto spoil." (Jer. xv, 13)

"Riches kept to the hurt of the owner." (Eccle. v, 12)

"Where are they that hoard up silver and gold wherein men trust? . . . They are gone down to hell and others are risen up in their place." (Bar. iii, 18, 19)

"Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matth. xix, 23, 24)

"Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." (Luke vi, 24, 25)

"We brought nothing into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out." (1 Tim. vi, 7)

"Go ye now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you." (Jas. v, 1–3)

"Those are true riches, which once possessed, cannot be lost." (S. Aug.)

"Those riches only that make us rich in virtue are real. Therefore if you desire to be rich, love true riches." (S. Greg.)

"Those things [riches] are good and are not good; for they are not lasting, they pass and vanish." (S. Aug.)

"You see a rich man living, think of him dying; you see what he possesses here, consider what he takes with him. He has great wealth, many slaves; he dies and those things remain behind, for whom I know not; for although during life he may give his property to whom he wishes, at death he cannot keep it for whom he wishes." (*Id.*)

"God calls riches of this world only deceitful riches; for those things are deceitful that cannot remain long with us, and, even when possessed, cannot satisfy the craving of our hearts." (S. Aug.)

"What have you to do with earthly riches which are not real and are not yours?" (S. Bern.)

"Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume." (Matth. vi, 20)

Divisions

I

Riches are called in Scripture the *mammon of iniquity,* although of themselves they are not bad nor incompatible with salvation. S. Augustine gives the reasons for this:

1. Because they are often *acquired unjustly,* by violence, fraud, and other unlawful means;

2. Because *people possess them unjustly,* that is to say, sinfully, by becoming attached to and placing all their confidence in them;

3. Because they are *used in a sinful manner,* by being wasted in foolish expenses and in gratifying the passions.

II

The bad use that is made of riches.

1. God gives them only that they might be an instrument of salvation, by being used in His service; and man makes them an instrument of his destruction, by causing them to serve his passions and his vanity.

2. God gives them to us to induce us to love Him more, and to be specially grateful to Him for them; but owing to a strange abuse which is only too common, these same riches cause people to forget God and furnish them with the pretexts for dispensing themselves from the most essential duties of religion.

3. God gives them to us that we should share them with others; and it often happens that those who possess them are the most hardened and the most insensible to the misery of their fellow-creatures.

III

Christian use of riches.

1. We should use them only as far as is necessary, and as we are obliged to do by the duty and decorum of our state of life.

2. The heart must be detached from them, even when one is working to acquire and preserve them by lawful means.

3. The use that is made of them should be sanctified by a good intention.

CXVI

FLATTERY

"If thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother." (Matth. xviii, 15)

We owe it to ourselves to bear with humble submission the faults which our neighbor commits against us, and to stifle all feelings of resentment. We owe it to our neighbor to correct him, to warn him of his faults:—and this is the highest degree of Christian charity. But how rare this charity is! Far from finding sincere people who, touched by our errors and faults, warn us and help us to correct them, we commonly meet only with seductive tongues that flatter us and encourage us in error. Consider: I. How culpable it is to flatter; II. How much he is to be pitied who loves to be flattered.

I. HOW CULPABLE IT IS TO FLATTER

The flatterer is a deceitful and double-faced man, whose heart in secret gives the lie to his lips. He is a cunning spirit who, joining with the tempter himself, throws a deceitful mask over the wounds of our soul; who studies our weaknesses in order to justify them to us; our passions in order to assist them; who suggests to us the crime but hides its enormity; who conducts us to perdition by an apparent path of virtue.

"A man that speaketh to his friend with flattering and dissembling words, spreadeth a net for his feet." (Prov. xxxix, 5)

"Flattery is deception by false praise." (S. Aug.)

"Flattery is correctly defined as a smooth-tongued enemy." (S. Jerome)

But there is nothing more wicked than to flatter any one in this manner; because by flattery you betray, (1) the interests of your brethren; (2) the interests of the public; (3) the interests of religion.

1. *By flattery you betray the interests of your brethren*

Religion obliges us to love our neighbor, to assist him, to help him to sanctify his soul; but do you love him when you flatter him? No;

on the contrary, that is the greatest injury you can do him. To flatter him is to declare yourself his enemy, and to sharpen the sword with which he strikes himself. Because when you flatter him you make him tranquil in sin, you strengthen him in his faults, you suggest to him perhaps some faults which he has not.

"The dissembler with his mouth deceiveth his friend." (Prov. xi, 9)

"O My people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps." (Is. iii, 12)

"Let every one of you please his neighbor unto good, to edification." (Rom. xv, 2)

"By pleasing speeches and good words they seduce the hearts of the innocent." (Rom. xvi, 18)

"The tongues of flatterers bind up souls in sins; for it is a pleasure to do those things in which not only the censurer is not feared, but the flatterer is heard." (S. Aug.)

"There are two kinds of persecutors, those who blame and those who flatter; but the tongue of the flatterer does more injury than the hand of him who takes revenge." (*Id.*)

"Flattery is the enemy of friendship." (*Id.*)

"The false praise and the pretended love of the flatterer deceive a man, turn away his mind from seeing the truth, and render him incapable of knowing himself; he becomes effeminate." (*Id.*)

"Flattery is always cunning, calculating, and smooth-tongued." (S. Jerome.)

"There is nothing that so easily corrupts the mind of man as flattery; for the tongue of the flatterer does more injury than the sword of the persecutor." (*Id.*)

"Flattery corrupts thoughtless people, and wickedly inflicts a pleasant wound on the credulous by false praise." (*Id.*)

"There are many who approve of bad actions as good, and who strive to adorn vices with the opposite virtues." (S. Basil)

"The flatterer wishes to be considered a friend: there is no greater enemy of friendship." (S. Cypr.)

2. *By flattery you betray the interests of the public*

What in fact is the ordinary source of all the scandals, animosities, and injustices that are so wide-spread in the world? It is flattery. However disposed men may be to follow their vicious inclinations, they would not abandon themselves to their passions with such audacity if they did not find mercenary souls to approve of their criminal excesses. A man sins boldly when he is sure of being applauded. Would there be so much open sin if there were in each family honest,

upright people to say to the sinner, as S. John the Baptist said: "It is not lawful for thee"? (Matth. xiv, 4). But, alas! the sinner always finds those who approve of his sin.

"They that say to the wicked man: Thou art just; shall be cursed by the people, and the tribes shall abhor them." (Prov. xxiv, 24)

"The flatterer, erring himself, encourages error [in others], and flattering, inveigles [them] into error." (S. Aug.)

"Whoever flatters those that lead evil lives, places, as it were, a little cushion under the head of a sick man, so that he who should be cured of his fault, may quietly rest in it, supported by praise." (S. Greg.)

"There is no graver temptation than to fall in with a flatterer, for he is more cruel than a wild beast." (S. Chrys.)

"The flatterer is the minister of the evil spirits, the leader of pride, the destroyer of virtue, an erring commander." (S. John Clim.)

"The secret detractor is a most destructive fox; but the smooth-tongued flatterer is not less so." (S. Bern.)

3. *By flattery you betray the interests of religion*

By your crafty dissembling you show that you fear man more than God, and that it matters little to you that God is offended, provided you gain a good reputation in the world. . . . We are all bound to uphold the honor and glory of God. Why then, cowardly traitors, do you remain silent in the presence of those who are so wretched as to offend Him?

"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, both are abominable before God." (Prov. xvii, 15)

"Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." (Is. v, 20)

"Woe to you that justify the wicked for gifts." (*Ibid.*, 23)

"Woe to them that sew cushions under every elbow, and make pillows for the heads of persons of every age to catch souls." (Ezech. xiii, 18)

"They who do such things are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them." (Rom. i, 32)

"Neither have we used at any time the speech of flattery, as you know." (1 Thess. ii, 5)

"Praise not any man before death." (Eccli. xi, 30)

"Such [flatterers] love falsehood; they are destroyers of truth, authors of hatred, mediators of satan." (S. Aug.)

"If you praise a wicked man, by the very fact that he is wicked, are not you also wicked?" (*Id.*)

"You yourselves do not do evil, but to praise him that does it is in itself no small evil." (*Id.*)

"This vice [flattery] has increased in our day, it has reached its utmost and cannot be further augmented." (*Id.*)

"This vice reigns among many, especially in our time; and what is most grave, it takes the place of humility and benevolence; hence it happens that he who does not know how to flatter is considered either envious or proud." (S. Jerome)

II. HOW MUCH HE WHO LOVES FLATTERY IS TO BE PITIED

We like to be flattered. Does any one speak to us of our faults and attempt to correct them? At once we become indignant. We attribute the most wholesome counsels to prejudice and jealousy. We desire to be flattered at any cost; that is the passion of all, the ruling passion of human nature; and almost all are content to be left in ignorance of their faults, and to be spoken to only about things that flatter them.

"Speak unto us pleasant things, see errors for us." (Is. xxx, 10)

But consider to what you expose yourselves by this love of flattery; (1) you will not see your faults and you will never correct them; (2) you will not have any safe rules of conduct, and will be guided only by your own prejudices, or by those of others.

1. *He does not see his faults*

We have a great number of vices and imperfections. We do not often know them; it is necessary that some one should point them out to us,—otherwise, through hearing ourselves constantly praised, we shall very soon believe ourselves worthy of praise, we shall become blind to our faults, and it will come to pass that we shall carry with us to the grave the passions which we should have overcome in life.

You love those who flatter you. You avoid those who would make your faults known to you, those who speak to you the language of truth. Be careful.

"The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed." (Prov. xxix, 1)

"Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy." (Prov. xxvii, 6)

"It is better to be rebuked by a wise man, than to be deceived by the flattery of fools." (Eccle. vii, 6)

"Blessed is the man who has completely overcome this vice; who neither flatters nor trusts a flatterer, who neither deceives another nor is himself deceived." (S. Aug.)

"He who wishes to be praised by men will not be defended by them when Thou, O God, dost censure him; nor when Thou dost judge and condemn him who will be set free." (*Id.*)

"To be enervated by flattery not only is not a sign of strength, but seems even a mark of cowardice." (S. Ambr.)

"We are drawn into evil from birth, and willingly favor those who flatter us; and although we may answer that we are unworthy, and a false blush may overspread the face, yet the soul rejoices interiorly at its own praise." (S. Jerome)

"This is a condition of truth, to be always pursued by enmities, just as friendships are destroyed by pernicious flattery; for we willingly listen to what gives us pleasure, and are offended by what we do not wish to hear." (*Id.*)

"Praise causes the just to suffer, the wicked to rejoice." (S. Greg.)

"Fly from the approbation of flatterers as from deadly plagues of the soul; there is nothing that so easily corrupts the heart of man, nothing that inflicts so pleasing and enervating a wound on the soul." (S. Paulin.)

"The fool rejoices to be praised in his presence, but when a wise man is praised before his face, he is punished in his heart." (S. Greg.)

2. He will not have any safe rules of conduct

I admit that all your views may be upright and Christian; nevertheless, if you listen to flattery, you will be exposed to innumerable dangers. In the advice which he gives you, the flatterer will consult only your own particular inclination; he will suggest that which will be more pleasing, but by no means that which will be more advantageous to you; he will magnify in your mind an injury which you have received. And you will find yourself in the way of which the wise man speaks:

"There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death." (Prov. xiv, 12)

"An unjust man allureth his friend, and leadeth him into a way that is not good." (Prov. xvi, 29)

"He that rebuketh a man shall afterwards find favor with him, more than he that by a flattering tongue deceiveth him." (Prov. xxviii, 23)

"As silver is tried in the firing-pot, and gold in the furnace, so a man is tried by the mouth of him that praiseth." (Prov. xxvii, 21)

"The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head." (Ps. cxl, 5)

"Flattery is deceitful praise. The false praise of the flatterer is the oil of the sinner." (S. Aug.)

"The oil of the sinner fattens the head, while the applause of the flatterer soothes the mind by a false peace." (S. Greg.)

"Do I seek to please men?" (Gal. i, 10)

"Am I then become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. iv, 16)

"Fly from caressing flatterers as from enemies." (S. Jerome)

"I would rather be blamed by any one than praised by a flatterer; for a censurer is not to be feared by a lover of truth, but a flatterer errs himself and strengthens error in others." (S. Aug.)

"Let no one praise himself or desire to be praised by others; the one is characteristic of cunning, the other of vanity." (S. Ambr.)

"A flatterer is more dangerous than one who insults you. Therefore, shun a flatterer more than you would shun an insolent person." (S. Greg.)

Division

1. *Weakness of those who allow flattery, or who take pride in being flattered.* This weakness is shown:

1°. In the passion which they manifest for the esteem and praise of men;

2°. In the want of judgment which they show in choosing their friends, by preferring flatterers to those who are true and sincere;

3°. In not perceiving that those who flatter us mock and delude us;

4°. Finally, in the little forethought which they have of the dangers to which they expose themselves by allowing themselves to be led astray by the venal praises of false friends.

2. *Cowardice of those who flatter.*

1°. They are generally mean and servile friends, who applaud all the actions, whatever they may be, of those from whom they expect some favor;

2°. They are unfaithful servants, or enemies disguised as friends;

3°. They approve the good and the bad alike, and by so doing render themselves accomplices in all the evil of which flattery makes them approve.

CXVII

POVERTY

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matth. v, 3)

God has willed that some should possess wealth and that others should be in poverty. Owing to this inequality the poor have need of the rich, and the rich of the poor. The rich should help the poor in their distress; the poor ought to work and pray for the rich who assist them. If you are favored with riches, make a good use of them. If you are in want, be content with your lot. Followers of Christ, I am going to show you the esteem you should have for poverty, by representing to you the advantages that accompany it. Consider: I. What are the advantages of poverty? II. What are the obligations of the poor?

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY

If poverty is looked at from a human point of view it presents nothing but what is sad and repulsive to nature. To be in want of the necessaries of life is hard. But if we look at poverty with the eyes of faith, we shall see that it contains advantages capable of softening its natural severity: (1) it assures the salvation of the poor, by preserving them from the danger of riches, and affording the opportunity of practising the most sublime virtues; (2) it gives them a special right to the kingdom of Heaven.

1. *It assures the salvation of the poor*

What facility for saving your soul in a state which frees you from the cares and anxieties that riches bring with them, whether in acquiring or preserving them! Removed from the opportunities of satisfying the criminal passions, you will find easy means of acquiring and practising the most sublime virtues. Humility, detachment from worldly goods, abstinence, fasting, sobriety,—the practice of all these will become easy to you. Obliged to gain your bread by the sweat of your brow, you will not be exposed to the danger of falling into the vices that usually accompany idleness. Your laborious and con-

tinual occupations will afford you an opportunity of satisfying the justice of God for your sins and of meriting Heaven.

"Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he and we will praise him?" (Eccli. xxxi, 8, 9)

"Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses." (Matth. x, 9)

"If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor." (Matth. xix, 21)

"God hath made me to grow in the land of my poverty." (Gen. xi, 52)

"Let not your poverty displease you; you can find nothing richer." (S. Aug.)

"The poor man is always safe, and free from all fear." (S. Chrys.)

"He who loves nothing in this world, fears nothing in it." (S. Greg.)

"As riches are the instruments of all vices, so poverty is the nurse and guide of all virtues." (S. Greg.)

"Poverty is accustomed to guard humility in good hearts." (S. Greg.)

"Poverty is the first in order, and the parent, as it were, of all other virtues." (S. Ambr.)

"Poverty is the peaceful refuge, the school and exercising ground of patience." (S. Chrys.)

"Holy poverty is the most suitable instrument of virtue." (S. Greg. Naz.)

"Christian poverty is always rich, and he who possesses all things in the Lord of all things, is not afraid to labor in want in this world." (S. Leo.)

2. *It gives a special right to the eternal kingdom*

Poverty makes you like Jesus Christ, the Model of the predestined. In what state was Christ born? How did He live? But if in order to be counted among the number of the elect, we must unite in our person the different characteristics under which the Son of God made Himself known to men, what a pledge of predestination is there not found in poverty?

"Them whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." (Rom. viii, 29)

Thus it is that the Saviour promised the kingdom of Heaven to those who are found in that state of holy poverty:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." (Matth. v, 3)

How consoling these truths are, and how capable of softening the sorrows that accompany poverty. But it is especially at the hour of death that you will know the value of this virtue. The rich man dies with regret, because he sees himself separated from the wealth he loved. The poor man dies content: "To me to die is gain"; because he knows that his sorrows are about to be replaced by joys that shall never end. . . . Death of the rich sinner. . . . Death of Lazarus. . . .

"By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, saith the Lord." (Ps. xi, 6)

"Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked." (Ps. xxxvi, 16)

"Better is a little with justice, than great revenues with iniquity." (Prov. xvi, 8)

"Man, when he shall die, shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him." (Ps. xlviii, 18)

"His eyes look on the poor man." (Ps. x, 5)

"The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor." (Ps. x, 17, according to the Hebrew)

"Behold I have refined thee . . . I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty." (Is. xlviii, 10)

"Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life." (Prov. xxx, 8)

"The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." (Matth. viii, 20)

"Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him?" (Jas. ii, 5)

"I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich." (Apoc. ii, 9)

"Would you know how rich poverty is? It purchases Heaven." (S. Aug.)

"God made you poor, so that by suffering poverty for a short time, you might gain everlasting life." (S. Aug.)

"The fire of poverty purified Lazarus from sin, and the happiness of the present life rewarded the good deeds of the rich man." (S. Greg.)

"We have renounced things of small value, and we possess those that are precious; and the promises of Christ are fulfilled one hundred fold." (S. Jer.)

"He who is poor with Christ is rich enough." (S. Jerome)

"He who is rich before God can never be poor." (Lact.)

"Let all earthly treasure depart when heavenly is admitted." (S. Peter Dam.)

"The Saviour, to whom both gold and silver belong, consecrates holy poverty in His own Body." (S. Bern.)

"The poverty of Christ is richer than all the wealth, all the treasures of this world." (S. Bern.)

II. THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE POOR

However great the assurance which poverty gives of Heaven, let not the poor become presumptuous; for poverty has its dangers and perils, as well as riches. In order that poverty may be meritorious, it must be: (1) voluntary, humble, and submissive to the will of God; (2) industrious, so as to employ itself as God wills.

1. *Poverty must be voluntary.* Christ promised His kingdom only to the poor in spirit, that is, either to those who are voluntarily poor by an effective renunciation of all they possess, or to those who possess the riches of this world without being attached to them, and who assist the poor out of their superfluous wealth; or finally, to those who, poor by their state, or owing to some unhappy occurrence, bear their poverty patiently. If, then, you endure poverty only in murmuring against the will of God, if you complain of your lot, if you envy that of the rich, you are no longer poor in spirit, but rather rich in affection, you are straying from the road that should conduct you to Heaven, and being unhappy in this life, you expose yourself to the danger of being miserable in the next.

You may wish for some help in your poverty, and you may employ lawful means to provide the necessaries of life; but if Heaven does not bless your efforts, be content with your lot, and be convinced that God wishes you to be in that state.

"Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." (Ps. liv, 23)

"Be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." (Matth. vi, 31, 32)

"Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." (Tob. iv, 23)

"The poor man shall not be forgotten to the end: the patience of the poor shall not perish for ever." (Ps. ix, 19)

"The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, He humbleth and He exalteth." (1 Kings ii, 7)

"But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me." (Ps. xxxix, 18)

"I am poor and in labors from my youth." (Ps. lxxxvii, 16)

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." (Job i, 21)

"The poor shall eat and shall be filled; and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him; their hearts shall live for ever and ever." (Ps. xxi, 27)

"One is as it were rich, when he hath nothing; and another is as it were poor, when he hath great riches." (Prov. xiii, 7)

"Through poverty many have sinned." (Eccli. xxvii, 1)

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matth. vi, 33)

"Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee." (Matth. xix, 27)

"Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple." (Luke xiv, 33)

"As having nothing, and possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi, 10)

"Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. vi, 8)

"You took with joy the being stripped of your own goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance." (Heb. x, 34)

"The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." (Ps. xxxiii, 11)

"They shall have no inheritance; I [the Lord] am their inheritance, . . . I am their possession." (Ezech. xliv, 28)

"The man who is truly poor, is so rich that he regards the whole world as of little value." (S. Jerome)

"There is no one richer than him who truly loves poverty, and bears it cheerfully." (S. Chrys.)

"Elias chose poverty from the riches of the heart." (*Id.*)

"How can he be poor, who does not want, who does not covet the goods of another, and who is rich in God?" (Minut. Felix)

"It is something base and dishonorable, not indeed to be poor, but not to bear poverty nobly." (S. Basil)

"Poverty itself is to be considered not a virtue but a misfortune, unless you are poor in heart and affection." (Caesarius of Arles)

"What will it profit you to be poor if you are inflamed with cupidity?" (S. Aug.)

2. *But if the poor should be patient in bearing their sufferings, they should also be industrious in procuring alleviation of them.* If all men should work, in obedience to the command of God, those are specially bound to do so who otherwise have no means of living. But what do we see? Poor people, who, trusting to the charity which

they hope to receive from the rich, sink into idleness, and lead a wandering, vagabond life,—ignorant of even the first principles of religion. There are robust men who could work, there are vicious men who make a bad use of the alms given to them. Ah! these men are not the really poor of the Gospel. Away with these envious poor, who are always complaining of being treated most unfairly in the distribution of alms. Away with those bold and impudent poor, who answer only by insults and curses those who do not give them all they demand.

"If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. iii, 10)

"Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to appear poor in this world." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 7)

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21)

Divisions

I

1. *Poverty, from whatever cause it arises, is the most advantageous and surest means of saving our souls:*

1°. Because it shelters us from the dangers and temptations that are almost inseparable from riches, and frees us from the cares and anxieties which wealth brings with it;

2°. Because it gives us opportunities of practising the most heroic virtues;

3°. Because it makes us more like our Saviour.

2. *And yet it is the means least used by men.*

1°. In reality, the rich are rarely poor in spirit; the attachment to and the love which they have for their wealth, place them in continual danger of damnation, because in order to be saved it is absolutely necessary to be detached from the goods of this world;

2°. Neither do those who are poor through necessity make use of poverty; not being poor in spirit, this means, far from being of benefit to them, incites them to sin: they murmur, they are impatient, and so lose all the merit of their poverty.

II

1. The *poor in spirit,* submissive to the will of God, cannot be unhappy in troubles and afflictions; on the contrary they are *always happy* and content;

2. He who is truly poor in spirit, is rich in temporal goods and in treasures of grace.

CXVIII

WORK

"Why stand you here all the day idle? Go ye also in my vineyard." (Matth. xx, 6)

"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing." (Luke v, 5)

All men are obliged to work and avoid idleness. God commands it; He regulates and blesses work. There are some, however, who do not wish to work; and there are others who work, it is true, but do badly the work they do. It is thus that, for different reasons, both classes deprive themselves of the blessings which God bestows on work. There is question of working, and of working well. Consider: I. The obligation that binds us to work; II. The means of sanctifying work.

I. THE OBLIGATION THAT BINDS US TO WORK

In order to understand this obligation clearly, we have only to consider attentively that (1) we are men, (2) we are sinners, (3) we are Christians.

1. *Being men, work is inseparable from our nature*

"Man is born to labor and the bird to fly." (Job v, 7)

"The Lord God put him [Adam] into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and keep it." (Gen. ii, 15)

"Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam . . . from him that sitteth on a glorious throne, to him that is humbled in earth and ashes." (Eccli. xi, 1, 3)

"Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways and learn wisdom." (Prov. vi, 6)

"Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labor until the evening." (Ps. ciii, 23)

"God appointed man to labor and formed his body with that object; therefore, the idle man falls away from his own class, and from his office." (S. Chrys.)

"The first and peculiar office of the condition of man is to work,

so that sluggish idleness is contrary to man's nature." (S. Chrys.)

"There is nothing more dangerous than freedom from work, than idleness; therefore, God placed man under the necessity of working." (S. Chrys.)

"God did not create man to pass his life in idle and sluggish desires; but, on the contrary, to occupy himself with honorable labor." (S. Basil)

2. *Labor is the just punishment of sin, imposed on all the children of Adam*

This is the sentence which God pronounced against the father of the human race when he became a sinner:

"Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken." (Gen. iii, 17 f.)

Work then, and say to God:

"See my abjection and my labor; and forgive me all my sins." (Ps. xxiv, 18)

"If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. iii, 10)

"We have received the sentence condemning us to labor in him in whom we have all sinned without exception." (S. Bern.)

3. *Finally, we are obliged to work as Christians, since in that quality we should imitate Jesus Christ our Head, who worked from His earliest youth*

"In labors from my youth." (Ps. lxxxvii, 16)

"My Father worketh until now, and I work. . . . The works which the Father hath given Me to perfect, the works themselves which I do." (John v, 17, 36)

"We entreat you . . . that you do your own business, and work with your own hands." (1 Thess. iv, 11)

"We have heard that there are some among you . . . working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that working with silence, they would eat their own bread." (2 Thess. iii, 11, 12)

"You remember, brethren, our labor and toil, working night and day, lest we should be chargeable to any of you." (1 Thess. ii, 9)

"Such things as were needful for me and them that are with me, these hands have furnished." (Acts xx, 34)

After these Apostolic warnings, how could we dare to continue in idleness, which is the school of all vices?

"For idleness has taught much evil." (Eccli. xxxiii, 29)

"They are not in the labor of men; neither shall they be scourged like other men. [But what results from that?] Therefore pride hath held them fast: they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth as it were from fatness." (Ps. lxxii, 5–7)

"They have spoken wickedness; they have spoken iniquity on high. They have set their mouth against heaven." (*Ibid.*, 8, 9)

"The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness." (Matth. xxv, 30)

"Consider what sin deserves, if unprofitableness alone is sufficient to cause damnation." (S. Bern.)

"This was the iniquity of Sodom . . . the idleness of her and of her daughters." (Ezech. xvi, 49)

"God promises a reward not to idle dreamers, but to those who watch and work: the reward is prepared for the labor." (S. Ambr.)

"As a field, though neither sown nor planted, produces grass, so also man, if not occupied with necessary work will, since he is, as it were, under the necessity of doing something, give himself up to bad actions." (S. Chrys.)

"If the devil sees you slothful, lazy, languishing in idleness for a moment, he enters as into a deserted abode; but if he sees you active, vigilant, zealous, he will not even dare to think of doing so." (S. Chrys.)

"We give way to idle habits, we indulge in vanity and buffoonery, as if the life of man on earth were peace, and not warfare." (S. Bern.)

"We must work, not so much on account of the necessities of the body, as for the salvation of the soul." (S. Jerome)

II. MEANS OF SANCTIFYING OUR WORK

We must sanctify our work. To do this we should, (1) as men, work with prudence; (2) as sinners, work in a spirit of penance; (3) as Christians, work in union with Jesus Christ.

1. *As men we must work with prudence*

In the first place we must begin work with a pure intention, with the object of pleasing God; we must offer it to Him, and make a sacrifice to Him of all that is difficult and tedious in our work; for this purpose we should strengthen ourselves with the sign of the Cross.

"Whatever work occupies us, we should make the sign of the Cross on our forehead." (Tert.)

We must, then, undertake our labors with moderation and prudence, without allowing ourselves to give way to an excessive love of worldly goods, to avarice.

"Labor not to be rich; but set bounds to thy prudence." (Prov. xxiii, 4)

"Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked." (Ps. xxxvi, 16)

"The inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning, in the end shall be without a blessing." (Prov. xx, 21)

"What fruit, therefore, had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed?" (Rom. vi, 21)

"We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways. . . . What advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?" (Wis. v, 7, 8)

"Thou art spent with foolish labor." (Exod. xviii, 18)

"He that undertaketh many things, shall fall into judgment." (Eccli. xxix, 25)

"I hated all my application, whereof I had earnestly labored under the sun, being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool, and he shall have to rule over all my labors, with which I have labored and been solicitous; and is there anything so vain?" (Eccle. ii, 18, 19)

"There is but one . . . neither doth he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor and defraud my soul of good things? In this also is vanity, and a grievous vexation." (Eccle. iv, 8)

"Their hope is vain, and their labors without fruit, and their works unprofitable." (Wis. iii, 11)

2. As sinners we should labor in a spirit of penance, joining prayer to work, raising our hands to Heaven to obtain mercy

"In the day of my trouble I sought God, with my hands lifted up to him in the night; and I was not deceived." (Ps. lxxvi, 2)

But how must we act so as to arrive at that perfection?

1°. *We must nourish our hearts with holy affections,* we must think of God, of Heaven, of sin, which is the cause of all our evils.

"While working let him reflect on the cause of the work, so that the very pain which he endures in it may recall to his mind the fault for which he suffers." (S. Bern.)

2°. *We should speak good words only:*

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." (Eph. v, 19)

3°. *We must arm ourselves with patience,* in order to bear, with

humble submission to the will of God, the fatigues that accompany labor.

"Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him." (Ps. xxxvi, 7)

"Hate not laborious works, nor husbandry ordained by the Most High." (Eccli. vii, 16)

3. *Finally, in order to sanctify our work, we should, as Christians, unite ourselves to Jesus Christ*

He is our Head and our Model; we should consecrate to Him our pains and our sweat, suffering for Him as He suffered for us. Such has been the practice of all the Saints.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." (Rom. xii, 1)

"Join thyself to God and endure; . . . and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience." (Eccli. ii, 3, 4)

"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do; do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x, 31)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv, 58)

Divisions

I

1. *We must work.*

From whatever point of view we consider the condition of man, everything concurs in making known the obligation under which he is, of working. He ought to work, whether we consider what he is, (1) by nature, or (2) in the character of a sinner.

In vain will you say that your state in life dispenses you from working, that you have property to live on without doing anything. It is true that the work to which God has condemned mankind is not the same for all conditions of life; but there is no one, in whatever state he may be, who should not engage in some work, mental or bodily.

2. *How should we work?*

A man loses his labor, he condemns himself in work as in idleness, if the work which he does is not according to the will of God. It it is not enough to work, nor even to do much work, the work we do must be sanctified. A man must:

a) Work *as a reasonable being,* that is to say, he must engage in lawful and moderate labor;

b) He must work *as a Christian,* that is, he must refer all his work to God with the intention of pleasing Him.

II

We must work:

1. Because God obliges each man to work, and has placed him in this world for that purpose: "Man is born to labor." (Job v, 7)

2. In order to atone for our past sins, to preserve ourselves from sin in the future, and from all the sad effects of idleness.

3. In order to practise the good works suitable to our state, and to imitate the laborious life of Jesus Christ. . . . Do not say then: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat." (Luke xii, 19). "For if any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. iii, 10)

2. *We must sanctify our work.*

To do this two things are necessary:

1. To banish from it everything that could offend God: murmurings, impatience, blasphemy, oaths, lies, obscene works, immodest songs;

2. To work with the disposition of a true Christian, that is to say, through a good motive, with the view of pleasing God; consequently, to occupy ourselves with the work which He demands of us, when He demands it, and as He demands it.

CXIX

GOOD EMPLOYMENT OF TIME

"Son, observe time and fly from evil." (Eccli. iv, 23)

The source of all the disorders that prevail among men is the wrong use of time. Some pass their days in sloth and idleness, others in the tumult of business and worldly affairs. And yet, man's eternal salvation depends on the use of that time which he loses, and to which he attaches so little value. I. Motives that should induce us to employ our time well; II. How we should employ it.

I. MOTIVES THAT SHOULD INDUCE US TO EMPLOY OUR TIME WELL

The more precious and necessary a thing is, the more we should value it; the more limited the use of it that is given to us, the more eager we should be to profit by it, especially if after having lost it there is no longer any hope of recovering it. But such are the chief motives that should make time precious and valuable in our eyes. (1) Time is valuable, (2) it is short, (3) its loss is irreparable.

1. *Time is valuable,* both with reference to the end for which it is given to us, and to what it cost Jesus Christ to procure it for us.

a) For what end, in fact, has God given us the time of this life on earth? Is it to hoard up riches? No; it is in order *that we may gain Heaven.* Time conducts us to eternity; and our eternity will be happy or miserable, according as we shall have made a good or a bad use of time.

"A little of the time that is being wasted is the price of eternity." (S. Jerome)

"Time is as valuable as God Himself. . . . God is gained by time well spent." (S. Bern.)

b) But what esteem shall we not have of time, if we consider what it cost Jesus Christ to procure it for us? Condemned to death on account of original sin, we should receive life only to lose it at the very instant we received it. The Blood of Jesus Christ has blotted out that

decree of death. The death of Christ alone then gives us the right to live, and if, notwithstanding our sins, God gives us time for repentance, to whom do we owe it? To Jesus Christ.

"Cut it down . . . Lord [Christ answers], let it alone this year also." (Luke xiii, 7, 8)

"The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed, because His commiserations have not failed." (Lament. iii, 22)

How do you employ your time? . . . Some pass their time in idleness: "Doing nothing." Others pass it in doing something else than what they should do: "Doing another thing." Others, more criminal still, pass it in doing what is wicked: "Doing evil." (Seneca)

"There is nothing more precious than time; but, alas! to-day there is nothing that is considered of less value." (S. Bern.)

"Time is very precious; now is the day of salvation; now is the acceptable time. But, alas! that thou dost not more profitably spend this time, wherein thou canst earn that whereby thou mayest live for ever. The time will come, when thou wilt wish for one day or hour to amend; and I know not whether thou wilt obtain it." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 23)

2. *Time is short.* A man has hardly come into the world, when he is obliged to think of quitting it. There is, so to speak, only one step from the cradle to the grave. The greater number of men live but a short time, and at death what are the years of those who live the longest?

"A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday, which is past." (Ps. lxxxix, 4)

"My days have passed more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver, and are consumed without any hope. Remember that my life is but wind, and my eye shall not return to see good things." (Job vii, 6, 7)

"Against a leaf that is carried away with the wind, thou shewest thy power, and thou pursuest a dry straw." (Job xiii, 25)

"We are but of yesterday, and are ignorant that our days upon earth are but a shadow." (Job viii, 9)

"Man, born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state." (Job xiv, 1, 2)

"Man is like to vanity; his days pass away like a shadow." (Ps. cxliii, 4)

"Our time is as the passing of a shadow." (Wis. ii, 5)

"The time is short; it remaineth . . . that they that use this world

be as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii, 29, 31)

"What is your life? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while." (Jas. iv, 15)

"The duration of all time is brief when compared with eternity." (S. Jerome)

"Life is short. The word I speak and the letter I write, adds to my age, or shortens my life. The older we grow, the nearer we come to the grave." (*Id.*)

"One hour is the portion of all life." (S. Ambr.)

"Nothing that has an end is long. All time compared to eternity is to be reckoned, not simply as short, but as nothing." (S. Aug.)

"Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." (Ps. liv, 24)

3. *The loss of time is irreparable.* The years we have lived on earth are no longer at our disposal. Happy are we if we have spent them well. How great will be the regret of a dying man when he sees that those days which he could have used so as to gain Heaven, have passed away for ever? Will you wait for a like fate before you reflect on the value of time, and regret what you have lost?

"Our years do not come to remain with us; but when they pass over us they wear us out." (S. Aug.)

"There is no greater loss to us than the loss of time wasted." (S. Bonav.)

"All things are snatched away by the fleeting moments; the torrent rushes on." (S. Aug.)

"He [man] knoweth not that time shall pass, and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die." (Eccli. xi, 20)

"Always remember the end, and that time once lost never returns. . . . Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 25)

"All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on. . . . So we also, being born, forthwith ceased to be. . . . Such things as these the sinners said in hell." (Wis. v, 9, 13, 14)

"Knowing that while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . . But we are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord. And therefore we labor, whether absent or present, to please Him." (2 Cor. v, 6–9)

"He who does not weep as a pilgrim shall not rejoice as a citizen." (S. Aug.)

II. HOW WE SHOULD EMPLOY TIME

To make a good use of time we must consider it with reference to the past, to the present, and to the future. We should: (1) atone for the past, (2) be careful of the present, and (3) take precautions against the future.

1. *We should atone for the past.* Although it is not in our power to recall the time that is past, nevertheless we can atone for and redeem it.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. v, 16)

What does it mean to redeem property in commerce? It means that, in order to recover the property, we pay back the price we received for it, we pay a debt with which we are burdened. You have sold your time to the world. You have contracted debts towards the justice of God. These debts are your sins. These sins are past, it is true, but your crime still remains in the stain with which it has disfigured your soul; and that stain will remain, until it is blotted out by tears of repentance.

"All these things are passed away like a shadow." (Wis. v, 9)

"[That is] they have passed from the hand, not from the mind. To act was a matter of time, to have acted will have eternal consequences." (S. Bern.)

We must have recourse to penance as the penitent king of whom Isaias speaks:

"I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Is. xxxviii, 15)

If you form similar resolutions in your heart and put them into practice, God will say to you:

"I will restore to you the years which the locust, and the bruchus, and the mildew, and the palm-worm have eaten." (Joel ii, 25)

"The time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the gentiles for them who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, etc." (1 Pet. iv, 3)

"There is this difference between eternity and time, that the one is lasting, whereas the other is changeable." (S. Aug.)

"We redeem the time when by penance we atone for a life wasted in committing sin." (S. Greg.)

"What is it to redeem the time unless, when necessary, to turn temporal losses to good account by making them the means of obtaining and laying hold of life everlasting, by comparing the nothingness of time with respect to eternity, and by making a good use of the opportunities and occasions afforded us." (S. Aug.)

"Count as lost the time in which you do not think of God: indeed nothing else belongs to us, time only is ours." (S. Bern.)

"The time of examination draws nearer each day; every hour brings us nearer to judgment." (S. Eucher.)

2. *We should be careful of the present.* You cannot dispose of the time that is passed, since it is no longer yours; you cannot dispose of the time to come, since it is not yet yours and may never be; the present time alone belongs to you, and even that is escaping from you while you speak. Profit by it, then. If you were sure that you had only this year, this day to live, how, I ask you, would you spend it? There is one day that will be the last for you. Can you be certain that this is not it?

"Do good to thy friend [thy soul] before thou die. . . . Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." (Eccli. xiv, 13, 14)

"In doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore whilst we have time let us work good." (Gal. vi, 9, 10)

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17)

"Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." (Eccle. ix, 10)

"He [the Lord] hath called against me the time." (Lament. i, 15)

"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi, 2)

"If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace." (Luke xix, 42)

"Say not: The first ages were better than the present; virtues make days good, vices make them evil." (S. Jerome)

"It is better to be old in virtues than in years, in merit than in time; age is perfect when virtue is perfect." (Hugh of S. Victor)

"Every hope that depends on time is uncertain, because time itself is uncertain." (S. Aug.)

"Let us rejoice to have lived during that time only which we have passed in innocence and humility." (S. Greg.)

"A man who is truly obedient to God knows how to remain firm in the midst of transitory things; he knows how to earnestly direct the progress of his soul during the passing away of these fleeting hours." (*Id.*)

"Let no one think that the time which is wasted in idle conversation is of little value." (S. Bern.)

"The days of salvation are passing away, and no one reflects." (*Id.*)

"What is more slothful than this? You waste long nights in sluggish sleep, and you prolong idle days in conversation." (*Id.*)

"Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time." (Eccle. ix, 12)

"Do, my beloved, do now all thou canst, because thou knowest not when thou shalt die; nor knowest thou what shall befall thee after death." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 23)

"As feast by feast returns, we should make our resolution, as if we were then to depart out of this world and to go to the everlasting feast. . . . And if it [the reward] be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared, and as yet unworthy of the great glory." (*Imit.*, B. 1, c. 19)

3. *We should take precautions against the future.* In thus placing the present time to profit you will be taking precautions against the future, on which you should not count. How can we, in truth, count on a time which is so uncertain? God has not promised it to us; neither vigor of manhood nor strength of constitution can guarantee it to us. To expose our eternal salvation to the uncertainty of a time to come is to place it in danger. You do not act in this manner in temporal affairs. If the occasion of making wordly profit presents itself to you, you do not wait until to-morrow.

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." (Luke xvi, 8)

What blindness! It seems, to see you acting in this way, that you think you will never die, or that you have made an agreement with death, to strike you only when you yourselves wish. Foolish sinner! You are perhaps at the end of your life.

"[Behold, for you] it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent." (Luke xxiv, 29)

"He swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever. . . . That time shall be no more." (Apoc. x, 6)

"Boast not for to-morrow, for thou knowest not what the day to come may bring forth." (Prov. xxvii, 1)

"Remember wrath, for it will not tarry long." (Eccli. vii, 18)

"Remember that death is not slow." (Eccli. xiv, 12)

"If it make any delay, wait for it; for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." (Habac. ii, 3)

"All things have their season, and in their times all things pass

under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. . . . [And] what hath man more of his labor?" (Eccle. iii, 1, 2, 9)

"The heart of a wise man understandeth time and answer. There is a time and opportunity for every business. . . . Because he [man] is ignorant of things past and things to come he cannot know by any messenger. It is not in man's power to stop the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death." (Eccle. viii, 5–8)

"It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power." (Acts i, 7)

"And that knowing the season; that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed." (Rom. xiii, 11)

"Trade till I come." (Luke xix, 13)

"The night cometh when no man can work." (John ix, 4)

"Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not." (John xii, 35)

"I had in my mind the eternal years. . . . And I said: Now I have begun." (Ps. lxxvi, 6, 11)

Divisions

I

1. *Let us understand the value of time and we shall not lose it.*

There are *three reasons* that should render time precious and valuable to every prudent man:

1°. It is the price of eternity;

2°. It is short, and cannot be too quickly placed to profit;

3°. Its loss is irreparable; time once lost is lost without hope of recovery.

2. *Let us understand the value of time, and employ it only in working out our salvation.*

The Christian use of time does not consist simply in filling up each moment, but in filling it up in order, and according to the will of God, who gives it to us. But in what does this order consist, which should regulate the measure of our occupations and sanctify the use of our time? It consists

1°. In confining ourselves to the occupations attached to our state of life;

2°. In regarding as the most essential and the most privileged of our occupations, those that concern the salvation of our soul.

II

1. *There is nothing more easily lost than time, and nothing the loss of which causes less uneasiness.*

We lose time,

1°. By doing nothing;

2°. By doing evil, by passing the greater part of our time in licentiousness, injustice, and iniquity;

3°. By occupying ourselves with trifling and useless matters;

4°. By doing any other thing than that which we should do. "A portion of time is lost by those who do nothing, a very great portion by those who do evil, and the whole by those who do any other thing but what they should do." (Seneca.)

2. *Yet there is no loss that should be more keenly felt.*

1°. Because it is in itself a great loss; for we deprive ourselves of the graces we would acquire by occupying our time in a holy manner.

2°. Because such loss is irreparable;

3°. Because it carries with it the loss of the Sovereign Good in causing us to lose a happy eternity.

III

1. *We must repair the past,*

1°. By a sincere sorrow for having made a bad use of time;

2°. By works of supererogation: we did not do what we were bound to do; there is nothing more just than that we should do now more than we are obliged to do;

3°. By fulfilling our duties more fervently and punctually.

2. *We must regulate the future,* by dividing our time among the duties we owe to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves; by observing these three rules:

1°. To curtail nothing from what we owe to God;

2°. Not to give so much of our time to others as to retain none for ourselves;

3°. To give to our duties and business only the time that is necessary, and not to give ourselves up to them altogether.

CXX

FRATERNAL CORRECTION

"He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor." (Eccli. xvii, 12)

By fraternal correction is understood every remonstrance that springs from a spirit of charity, and is made to any one for a fault he has committed, to induce him to repair that fault, or to prevent him from committing other faults in the future. Consider: I. The obligation of exercising fraternal correction; II. Who are bound to fulfil this duty; III. How to fulfil it.

I. THE OBLIGATION OF EXERCISING FRATERNAL CORRECTION

The precept of fraternal correction is founded (1) on the love we owe to God, (2) on the love we owe to our neighbor, (3) on the general interest.

1. *It is founded on the love we owe to God,* and on the zeal which we should show for His glory and interests. But how can we show that love and zeal better than by preventing others from offending and dishonoring Him?

"They that rebuke [the impious man] shall be praised, and a blessing shall come upon them." (Prov. xxiv, 25)

"Before thou inquire, blame no man; and when thou hast inquired, reprove justly." (Eccli. xi, 7)

"Admonish thy neighbor before thou threaten him, and give place to the fear of the Most High." (Eccli. xix, 17, 18)

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. v, 11)

"Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." (2 Tim. iv, 2)

"Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." (Tit. i, 13)

"Reproof is to be employed but rarely, and in great necessity; and the interests of God, not our own interests, must be kept in view." (S. Aug.)

"Nevertheless I would specially choose those who are earnest and

zealous, who speak of the sin and condemn it; for this is the greatest mercy and clemency, to heal the wounds." (S. Chrys.)

"Let that zeal, that love of justice, that hatred of iniquity, burn in our hearts; let no one cherish vices, let no one conceal his sins." (S. Bern.)

2. The precept is founded on the duty of charity towards our neighbor. It is included in, and makes part of that duty, because we cannot exercise this charity more benficially than in preventing our neighbor from losing his soul, and in withdrawing him from sin which would be the cause of his damnation.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but reprove him openly, lest thou incur sin through him." (Levit. xix, 17)

"Open rebuke is better than hidden love." (Prov. xxvii, 5)

"Reprove a friend, lest he may not have understood, and say I did it not; or if he did it, that he may do it no more." (Eccli. xix, 13)

"If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him; and if he do penance, forgive him." (Luke xvii, 3)

"If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man . . . yet do not esteem him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thess. iii, 14)

"If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi, 1)

"Rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble-minded." (1 Thess. v, 14)

"We should reprove in a spirit of love, not with the desire of injuring, but with the hope of correcting." (S. Aug.)

"We should never undertake the duty of rebuking the sin of another unless we can certainly assure ourselves that we are doing so in a spirit of love." (S. Aug.)

"Think not that you love your servant when you do not chastise him, or that you love your son when you do not correct him; this is weakness, not charity." (S. Aug.)

"Reproofs are good, and for the most part, better than the friendship that is silent; and if your friend thinks that you are offended, do you notwithstanding reprove him." (S. Ambr.)

"Let sins be hated, not men; let the violent be reproved, the weak tolerated; and when it is necessary to chastise more severely, let the punishment be inflicted not in a spirit of anger, but with the hope of doing good." (S. Leo)

"Let kindness rather than severity urge us to reprove; encouragement more than anger; charity rather than power." (*Id.*)

3. *The precept is founded on the interest which each one should take in the public welfare.* If no one reproved or converted sinners and those who neglect their duties, sin would very soon become an infectious evil that would spread on all sides.

"Power, when it is tried, reproveth the unwise." (Wis. i, 3)

"If the severity of discipline remains sunk in sleep, iniquity rages with impunity." (S. Aug.)

"The sin of one man which, when known, is not reproved, contaminates many, nay, it contaminates all who know it and do not avoid the sinner, or who, when they can reprove him, remain silent; for he does not seem to himself to sin when no one reproves him or avoids him." (S. Ambr.)

"Impunity is the offspring of carelessness, the mother of pride, the foster-parent of transgressions." (S. Bern.)

II. WHO ARE BOUND TO FULFIL THIS DUTY

1. This duty is *obligatory on all who have authority over others,* magistrates, pastors, parents, masters, mistresses. It is attached to the position they occupy, since they will have to render an account to God of the loss of those the care of whom He has more particularly entrusted to them.

"Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities." (Eccli. vii, 6)

"Withhold not correction from a child. . . . Thou shalt beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell." (Prov. xxiii, 13, 14)

"What son is there whom the father doth not correct." (Hebr. xii, 7)

"If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v, 8)

"Parents shall give an account of the sins which their children have committed." (Orig.)

"Masters, watch over the salvation of your servants with the utmost care." (S. Aug.)

"To be silent when you should reprove, is to consent; and we know that the same punishment awaits those who do wrong, and those who consent to it." (S. Bern.)

2. But this duty is *incumbent on each individual,* also, no matter what his state or position may be. Indeed, magistrates, as such, have not the right to punish all kinds of sins. Pastors do not always see or know the licentiousness of those who compose their flocks. Who

then will be able to reprove vice? I say that each one of you is bound to do so when he sees sin committed. "He gave to every one commandment."

"A physician is irksome to a raving lunatic, and a father to a wayward son: the one in binding, the other in punishing, but both influenced by love. If, however, they neglect these and allow them to perish, their false clemency is cruel." (S. Aug.)

"You think little of the wound of your brother, you see him perish, and you neglect him; your silence is worse than his reviling." (*Id.*)

"He who refuses to set right the sensual life [of another], as far as he can do so, in reality denies that he belongs to God." (S. Greg.)

"He who does not put right the things that should be corrected, is guilty; and he who neglects to amend what he can put right, is guilty of the same fault as the sinner." (*Id.*)

"He who can correct and neglects to do so, undoubtedly makes himself a sharer; he who assists another to do good, does good himself." (*Id.*)

"He who does not reprove an erring brother, in a certain sense, encourages him to sin." (S. Ambr.)

"I share in the sin of all sinners when I do not reprove them." (S. Prosper)

"He who neglects to put right what he can correct is undoubtedly guilty of the fault of the person sinning." (S. Leo)

"When vices are reproved and scandal thence arises, he who is guilty of the fault that has to be reproved, and not he who reproves, is the cause of the scandal." (S. Bern.)

III. HOW TO FULFIL THIS DUTY

It would be indiscreet to administer this correction in the same way to all classes of persons. It is necessary, therefore, to know how to administer it, lest the evil should be augmented instead of being cured. Great prudence is necessary in fulfilling this duty. Regard must be had to the age, rank, temper, disposition of those who are to receive correction. We should know how to act towards our inferiors, towards our equals, towards our superiors.

"Rebuke not a scorner lest he hate thee. Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee." (Prov. ix, 8)

"A rebuke availeth more with a wise man, than a hundred stripes with a fool." (Prov. xvii, 10)

"[But thou, who dost correct] cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matth. vii, 5)

"[For] why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not." (Luke vi, 41)

"Physician, heal thyself." (Luke iv, 23)

"He justly reprehends another who himself has not that for which another may reprehend him." (S. Aug.)

"He who takes care to correct the vices of others should be free from vice himself." (S. Greg.)

"I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children." (1 Cor. iv, 14)

"Them that sin reprove before all, that the rest also may have fear." (1 Tim. v, 20)

"See that public sinners make public reparation for the scandal; but reprove privately those who sin in private. Bide your time, for such is the teaching of Holy Writ." (S. Aug.)

"Sins that are manifest are not to be cleansed by secret correction, but those who sin openly are to be censured openly, that when they are cured by a public reproof, those who imitated their sin may imitate their amendment." (S. Greg.)

"The more humbly we correct others, the better we shall recognize ourselves in those whom we free from faults." (*Id.*)

"A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that he is subverted." (Tit. iii, 10)

"Deal carefully with those who receive correction badly, when you fear that they may become worse because of this." (S. Aug.)

"Whatever is said in a bad temper is the violence of one who punishes, not the charity of one who corrects. Love, and say what you will." (S. Aug.)

"We must use less severity, so that sincere charity may help in curing greater evils." (*Id.*)

"If we permit those over whom we have power, to commit crimes in our presence, we shall be guilty in their presence." (*Id.*)

"Let us not share in the sins of those whom we have not the power to correct." (*Id.*)

"By a mild warning the proud are led on to greater crimes." (*Id.*)

"We must use severe correction as a medicine; but it depends on God to make it profitable to those we correct." (*Id.*)

"Let the vigor of discipline regulate clemency, and clemency soften the vigor; and let each be so set off by the other that the vigor may not be too stern, nor the mildness lax." (S. Greg.)

"Understand that this is the order to be observed in correction, that you love the persons and punish the vices; lest if you would act otherwise, correction may change into severity, and you lose those whom you desire to amend." (*Id.*)

"A friendly correction does more good than a violent accusation; the one touches shame, the other excites indignation." (S. Ambr.)

"Your brother must be corrected apart from others, lest if he once lose his modesty and shame, he may remain in sin; and if he indeed hear, we shall gain his soul; and through the salvation of another we shall procure our own salvation." (S. Jerome)

There is one thing that should urge us to discharge faithfully this duty of fraternal correction, and that is, the great benefit we ourselves can gain from it.

"If thy brother shall have offended against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother." (Matth. xviii, 15)

"If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (Jas. v, 19, 20)

"He that rebuketh a man shall afterwards find favor with him, more than he that by a flattering tongue deceiveth him." (Prov. xxviii, 23)

"The perverse are hard to be corrected." (Eccle. i, 15)

"All correction seems indeed bitter when it is given, but it produces the sweetest fruits." (S. Jerome)

"Let him who reproves have truth as a witness, have mildness as a father, have justice as a judge." (S. Bern.)

We should take in good part the corrections and reprimands we receive; we should never despise these salutary remonstrances.

"He that yieldeth to reproof shall be glorified." (Prov. xiii, 18)

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth; and as a father in the son He pleaseth Himself." (Prov. iii, 12)

"The ear that heareth the reproof of life, shall abide in the midst of the wise." (Prov. xv, 31)

"Consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom he hath despised." (Eccle. vii, 14)

"A man that is prudent and well instructed will not murmur when he is reproved." (Eccli. x, 28)

"How good is it, when thou art reproved, to show repentance! for so thou shalt escape wilful sin." (Eccli. xx, 4)

"The way of life to him that observeth correction; but he that forsaketh reproofs goeth astray." (Prov. x, 17)

"He that rejecteth instruction despiseth his own soul; but he that yieldeth to reproof possesseth understanding." (Prov. xv, 32)

"He that hateth reproof is foolish." (Prov. xii, 1)

"He that hateth reproof shall die." (Prov. xv, 10)

"He that hateth chastisement, shall have less life." (Eccli. xix, 5)

"A corrupt man loveth not one that reproveth him, nor will he go to the wise." (Prov. xv, 12)

"The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed." (Prov. xxix, 1)

"We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let Us forsake her." (Jer. li, 9)

"Whoever you are that do not wish to be reproved, you ought for that very reason to be reproved, namely, that you are unwilling to receive reproof." (S. Aug.)

"Your vice is that you are evil; and your greater vice, that you are unwilling to be reproved because you are evil." (*Id.*)

Divisions

I

1. *Fraternal correction* is *holy,* when it is made through a motive of charity.
2. It is *salutary* and *efficacious,* when it is regulated by prudence.
3. It is *meritorious,* when the end proposed is the glory of God.

II

The *zeal which induces us to correct our neighbor* should be,

1. Supported by good example;
2. According to knowledge, that is, prudent and discreet;
3. Vigorous and firm when necessary.

III

Correction should be received,

1. *With humility,* the sinner acknowledging himself as such, without excusing his fault through pride.
2. *With gratitude,* since it is a great benefit.
3. *With the firm purpose of profiting by it* and correcting one's faults.

CXXI

ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

"God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Philip. i, 8)

Zeal for the salvation of souls is an effect of charity and divine love; it is an ardent desire to see the whole world loving, honoring, and serving God.

There are three things to be considered in the zeal which we should have for the salvation of souls: I. The obligation of procuring the salvation of our neighbor; II. The motives that should induce us to procure it; III. The qualities which zeal should have that it may succeed.

I. OBLIGATION OF PROCURING THE SALVATION OF OUR NEIGHBOR

Every Christian is obliged to procure the salvation of his neighbor according to his means and opportunities: (1) This is a commandment of God: "He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his brother." (Eccli. xvii, 12). (2) This obligation is founded on Christian charity, which obliges us to love our neighbor as God commands us. But although this obligation is common to all, nevertheless there are certain persons whom it binds more particularly, such as those who have authority over others, magistrates, parents, superiors, etc. All are bound by it, since there is no one who cannot help to save others by pious conversations, charitable warnings, example, prayer.

"At the hand of man will I require the life of man." (Gen. ix, 5)

"With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant." (3 Kings, xix, 10, 14)

"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me, and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." (Ps. lxviii, 10)

"Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee, and pined away because of Thy enemies?" (Ps. cxxxviii, 21)

"A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law." (Ps. cxviii, 53)

"I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away, because they kept not Thy word." (*Ibid.*, 158)

"I will set my jealousy against thee." (Ezech. xxiii, 25)

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" (2 Cor. xi, 29)

"I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii, 49)

"The house of God is consumed with zeal, because it desires to amend all the perversity which it sees; and if it cannot amend it, it suffers and weeps." (S. Aug.)

"Let no one say: I am not able to admonish, I am not fit to exhort. Do what you can lest you be forced to lose in torments the badly preserved talent which you received." (S. Greg.)

"The zealous think that all who are enemies of God are hostile to them, even though it should be father, brother, or sister." (*Id.*)

"I know not whether a greater favor can be conferred on man by God than that others may save their souls by means of his help." (Richard of S. Victor)

"An ass falls, and some one is found to raise it; a soul falls, and there is no one found to help." (S. Bern.)

II. MOTIVES THAT SHOULD INDUCE US TO PROCURE THE SALVATION OF OUR NEIGHBOR

The *glory of God,* which we should procure as far as we can; but we shall never procure it better than by gaining souls for Him: there is no better way of showing our love. 2. The *honor* we shall acquire in being the associates, the co-operators of Jesus Christ in the work of saving souls. 3. The great *service* we render to these souls, who will be saved through our means and by our help. What gratitude will they not show us? With what ardor will they not strive to procure our salvation?

"I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix, 3)

"My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. iv, 19)

"The charity of Christ presseth us." (2 Cor. v, 14)

"They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii, 3)

"He that causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (Jas. v, 20)

"He who converts many to the love of God is more perfect in charity; and the sacrifice the most pleasing to God is zeal for souls." (S. Aug.)

"If God did not love sinners, He would not come down from Heaven to earth." (*Id.*)

"There is nothing more pleasing to God, and therefore more deserving of care, than the salvation of souls." (S. Chrys.)

"What can be compared to this zeal? It obtains what neither fasting, nor sleeping on the ground, nor long vigils, nor anything else obtains, the salvation of souls." (*Id.*)

"You would do more by converting a soul than by bestowing a large sum of money on the poor." (*Id.*)

"There is no sacrifice so great in the sight of God as zeal for souls." (S. Greg.)

"To co-operate with God in the salvation of souls is the most excellent of all divine works." (S. Denis)

"How can any one say he loves God and seeks His love, when he sees God's image lying in the dung-pit and is not troubled?" (S. Bonav.)

"Had I taken some of our Lord's Precious Blood from the Cross, and placed it in an earthen vessel to be carried about by me, what should be my feelings? How careful would I not be? But I have got the care of souls, that most precious treasure, to purchase which Christ, our Lord, a Buyer of infinite wisdom, shed the last drop of His Blood. If, then, the deposit entrusted to my care is, in the judgment of our Blessed Redeemer, of more value than His own Blood, where shall I, a miserable wretch, hide myself from the face of the Judge, if I happen to neglect my duty, and guard with less care the souls under my charge than I would guard the Precious Blood of Christ?" (S. Bern.)

"Love your neighbor if you have a love for yourself; nothing will be more beneficial than what you have done for others in charity." (S. Eucher.)

III. CONDITIONS WHICH ZEAL SHOULD POSSESS IN ORDER THAT IT MAY SUCCEED

As it is the glory of God that should influence us in working for the salvation of others, (1) this zeal should be pure, disinterested, and free from every human motive; (2) it should be formed on the model of the zeal of Jesus Christ, and possess the chief characteristics of that zeal, namely, mildness, patience, and condescension to the weakness of the neighbor; (3) this zeal having for its object the salvation of others, should be free from stain itself; it should therefore be "according to knowledge," that is to say, prudent, discreet, and well regulated.

"I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom. x, 2)

"Love is strong as death; jealousy is hard as hell." (Cant. viii, 6)

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezech. xxxiii, 11)

"We would gladly impart unto you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls; because you were become most dear unto us." (1 Thess. ii, 8)

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint. . . . And when the Prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory." (1 Pet. v, 2, 4)

"What is zeal but a certain interior incitement of charity, urging us to strive for the salvation of our brother." (S. Bern.)

"Let charity inflame your zeal, let knowledge direct it, and perseverance strengthen it. Let it be fervent, prudent, invincible." (*Id.*)

"Can any one light a fire without fire? And without charity can any one fulfil the duties of charity? Let the flame of love burn in you, so that the lethargy of your neighbors may be expelled by your heat, and the fire of love continue to increase." (S. Lawr. Just.)

"We are sometimes moved by passion, and think it zeal. We blame little things in others, and pass over greater things in ourselves." (*Imit.*, B. ii, c. 5)

"Have zeal first for yourself and then you will be justly able to show zeal for your neighbor." (*Id.*)

Divisions

I

Zeal for the Salvation of Souls Includes the Two Great Precepts of Charity.

1. We cannot better show the love we have for God than by a sincere and ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

2. We cannot show greater charity towards our neighbor than by working to procure for him the greatest of all treasures, his eternal salvation.

Thus, in zeal for the salvation of souls are included the two great precepts of charity, by which we fulfil the whole law.

II

1. To work in saving our neighbor's soul is the *greatest honor that can be rendered to God;*

2. It is *the greatest and the most important service that can be rendered to the neighbor.*

3. It is *the most meritorious work* we can do for ourselves.

III

1. *True zeal consists:*

1°. In hating sin and destroying it as much as possible;

2°. In loving sinners and using every effort to lead them to a better life.

2. In order to acquit ourselves of these two duties, by a perfect hatred and a perfect love, it is necessary,

1°. That the zeal which we have for *our enemies* should be without bitterness;

2°. That the zeal which we have for the salvation of *our friends* should be free from cowardice and from too great a complacency;

3°. That the zeal which we have for those who are *indifferent* to us should be prudent and discreet.

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Mass, Duty of hearing, on Sunday, 196 sq., 329 sqq.

Masters, Duties of, 217 sqq.
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Mercy, Divine, What it does for sinners, 38 sqq.; What sinners should do to correspond to it, 40 sqq.
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Parishioners, Qualities of good, 224 sqq.
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Peace, No, without mortification, 620 sqq.
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Prayer, As a means of grace, 378 sqq.; Necessity and advantages of, 394 sqq.; Conditions of efficacious, 397 sqq.; When and for whom we should pray, 402 sqq.
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Religion, Knowledge of, 2 sq.; Divine origin of, 6 sqq.
Reparation, 202 sq.
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Suffering, Advantage of to sinners, 677 sqq.; To the just, 680 sqq.
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Zeal for the salvation of souls, 750 sqq.